



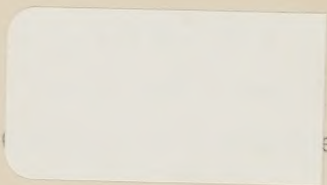
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# The Commission Executed

OR

*A Study of the New Testament  
Conversions and Other  
Evangelistic Topics*

BY

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"Bible Geography," "The Great Salvation,"  
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## **Dedication**

To those who are seeking a better understanding  
of the way of salvation, as it is revealed in the  
preaching and work of the apostles of our  
Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
this volume is lovingly  
dedicated.



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## PREFACE

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THE teachings, commonly known as "first principles," among the disciples of Christ have been familiar to me as far back as I can remember. I am a disciple almost by birthright, if I may use such an expression without being misunderstood. When I was a little boy, probably not more than five years old, my father and mother made the "good confession" in their own house, for the old log house was open to the preaching of the early pioneers from their first visits to southern Ohio, early in the fifties. A deep impression was made on me when my father and mother were buried with their Lord in Christian baptism. The plain, simple conditions of admission into the Church of Christ were deeply impressed upon my mind by the forceful, shall I not say powerful, sermons of a class of preachers, than whom no stronger men in natural gift have arisen among us even unto the present day. Before I was ten years old, I had listened frequently to such men as J. J. M. Dickey, Father Jarvis, John Frame, Joseph Dunn, Benjamin Franklin, and a number of others of like or less fame. In addition to these early advantages, for I certainly feel they were great advantages, I have read the literature of my brethren along the line of first principles until the doctrines have been so deeply fastened in my mind that it seems strange



to me that any mistake in this matter could ever have been made by good people who were seeking and teaching the way of salvation.

In preparing this volume, I know that I am indebted very deeply to what I have read and what I have heard, yet how to give the credit due I know not further than to say I claim no merit for originality. If the thoughts are familiar for the most part to many of the readers of this little volume, it is because they have enjoyed privileges similar to my own. If even the phraseology in many cases is strikingly familiar, do not blame me, for how can I help it, since I have become thoroughly saturated with the teaching, both verbal and written? Certainly, if I say many things in much the same way that others have said them, it will not be wondered at under the circumstances.

I have prepared this volume largely for classroom work, because I believe that every young man preparing for the ministry should be thoroughly enlightened on what we commonly call "First Principles of the Gospel." I hold that every one should be so intimately acquainted with the conversions of the New Testament that if he should be suddenly called on to preach on any one of them, he could do so without previous notice.

I fear that some are drifting away from the old landmarks that so clearly characterized the restoration movement in its earlier days. Some of the old themes that used to be handled with telling effect by the pioneers, are now seldom preached from some pulpits. It is, however, a noticeable fact that when "first principles" are shunned, evangelistic results are correspondingly meager. The men who are emi-

nently successful in bringing souls to Christ are the men who preach a full gospel; its facts, commands and promises are all declared. Show me the man who eliminates "first principles" from his preaching and I will show you one who has eliminated the baptistry from his church, so far as it is of any practical service; nay, I will show you a man who is in doubt as to whether the disciples, as a people, have any distinctive message for the world. Let us never forget that the union of the people of God, by a return to New Testament Christianity, will be a peculiar and distinctive message, so long as Christians are divided into hostile or semi-hostile sects through departures from the Christianity of the apostolic day.

If this volume shall be of service to some who are laboring for the restoration of the apostolic Church in its doctrines, practices and fruits, the hope of its author will be realized.



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# The Commission Executed

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Mystery of Godliness.

TEXT.—I. Tim. 3:16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

The old version reads, "God was manifest in the flesh," instead of "He who was manifested in the flesh," and a marginal note in the Revised Version says that the clause "He who" is supplanted by the word "which" in some ancient authorities.

It will be seen that we have an inspired comment on the word "Godliness" in the text itself. The Godliness referred to is not the Godliness of man, which is not a mystery and is never so represented. The Godliness of men is godly living, or a reproduction, according to plain instructions, of the Godliness or Godlikeness as seen in Jesus. That the Godliness of men is accomplished through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is clearly taught, and this indwelling may involve that which is mysterious, but the Godliness or Godlikeness accomplished through the indwelling is not a mystery. The Godliness as set

1

forth in this passage is, however, declared to be a mystery. This is the Godliness or Godlikeness of Christ. In other words, it is the incarnation of God that constitutes the mystery, as the language in explanation clearly shows. That which is represented as a mystery is set forth in the first clause and further qualified in the succeeding clauses of the text. We will take these clauses up and consider them in succession:

I. "He who was manifested in the flesh." Here the mystery is stated.

Men reject this mystery, because they can not understand it, but a little reflection shows the underlying vital necessity.

1. A vision of God is the starting-point in the upward progress of man. There is no true development that does not take God into the account. There is a religious factor entering into the complex being we call man. This must be developed co-ordinately with his other constitutional factors, and there is no such thing as true religious development without a vision of the one true and living God. To see God is, therefore, the fundamental necessity. This does not, of course, mean that the spiritual God must appear, or can appear, to the eye of flesh, but it means that there must be an intellectual and spiritual vision, a vision of faith, as the starting-point of all symmetrical growth; and the subject of this vision must come in concrete form. I have no confidence in any system or agency for the development of man that eliminates or disregards the idea of God as presented in Jesus Christ.

2. The reason why man needs this concrete vision of God is not hard to discover:

(1) It is required for a proper understanding of him. Man is so constituted that he approaches the abstract through the concrete. God must, therefore, be represented to man in terms and forms of a concrete being, in order that man may lay hold upon him and thus mount up to the spiritual conception of Deity. This constitutional requirement serves to explain the multitudinous forms of idolatry that have cursed mankind. It is the effort of man to bring the God idea within his own comprehension by making an image of Ilim. God has met this demand of the human soul by clothing himself in human flesh and walking before us in the form of a man. Therefore said Jesus, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." He who ridicules the incarnation shows himself to be ingorant of a great fundamental, constitutional need of the human soul. That this incarnation is a mystery, no one can deny, but that it is necessary to true human development, is both a psychological and theological doctrine.

(2) It is also true that human growth or development is accomplished through the operation of the principle of imitation. We are not transformed or developed through the apprehension of mere ethical doctrines, but by the incarnation of right principles and ideas, which we are thus enabled to imitate. These are seen in all their fullness when the attributes of God are presented in the form of man, thus giving us a model for our imitation. We can not imitate the abstract. Imitation demands a concrete model, therefore said the apostle Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." It will be seen, therefore, that there is a deep and far-reaching

significance in the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

3. Man also desires a vision of God. It is not something that is forced upon him. (1) This desire seems to be universal. Otherwise, why is it that no race or tribe, however small or insignificant, has been found that was destitute of religion? This is now a generally conceded truth. Religion is a universal fact. It is found wherever man exists. Could this be true if man did not instinctively reach out after God? Paul spoke of men feeling after God, and Philip said to the Master, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." The goodness of God is nowhere more conspicuous than in the manifesting of himself in flesh, which the apostle here declared to be the great mystery of Godliness. (2) If this desire is universal, it is doubtless constitutional or results from a constitutional need, and this points to gratification. All constitutional needs are provided for through the divine wisdom and goodness, therefore "God manifest in the flesh" is the answer of the loving Father to the want he has implanted in the creatures that he has made. Just as he has provided light for the eye, and sound for the ear, and food for the hunger of man, so he has provided a manifestation of himself that meets man's cry for God.

We come next to the qualifying or explanatory clauses:

## II. Justified in the Spirit.

1. The nature of a proposition determines the character of evidence needed for its establishment. This is a statement that appeals to reason and common sense. Extraordinary claims demand extra-

ordinary proof, ordinary claims can be established by ordinary proofs. (1) Jesus Christ puts forth extraordinary claims. They were in fact superhuman. He claimed to have come forth from God, and that he had an existence with the Father before the world was. He consequently assumed to speak with a dogmatism and an authority such as only God might exercise. He did not reason from the known to the unknown, but stated the ultimate facts with perfect assurance. He exercised prerogatives that only God may exercise; he assumed to forgive sins; in short, in his claims and in his attitude toward men he represented himself as God. Consequently John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (2) These claims demanded superhuman testimony in their support. Those who try to eliminate the superhuman evidences are logically compelled to deny the claims. To admit the claims and deny the superhuman testimonies involve a logical inconsistency. Rest assured whenever the superhuman evidences of Christ's claim are overthrown the claims themselves will have to go.

2. The extraordinary evidence demanded was given through the agency of the Spirit. Christ's coming was predicted through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and His life was lived under his power and dominion. (1) The prophet Isaiah pointed forward to Christ centuries before his advent. His life was foretold in many of its minute particulars, and the character and peculiarities of his kingdom were set forth. The multitude of predictions concerning



Christ and his kingdom constitute one of the most striking features of the Old Testament. (2) At his baptism the Spirit of God appeared in the form of a dove and abode upon Christ, and a voice from heaven came, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This striking manifestation of the Spirit at this particular time is very suggestive, owing to the fact that Christ was, at that time, just entering upon his public ministry. (3) He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to undergo the temptation, and through the power of the Spirit he triumphed and came forth and entered upon his public work. (4) His wisdom and miracle-working powers were attributed to the Spirit. Luke says that Jesus quoted the following words from the prophet Isaiah and applied them to himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (5) The writer of Hebrews says Jesus offered himself through the Spirit; that is, he made the great sin-offering through and by the power of the Spirit. The language is as follows: Heb. 9:14, "How much more" (than the blood of bulls and goats) "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (6) In Rom. 1:14, Paul teaches that Jesus was raised from the dead through the Spirit of holiness, and thus declared to be the Son of God with power, and Peter declares that he was quickened (that is, raised from the dead) by the Spirit. (7) John gives

a comprehensive statement of the spiritual endowment of Christ by declaring that God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him. This, of course, means that there was no restriction in his spiritual qualifications. He did not receive the Spirit by measure, but without measure, in unlimited degree. All this may serve to give us some idea of the meaning of the phrase, "Justified in the Spirit."

### III. "Seen of angels" is the next specification.

1. This great mystery of the Godlikeness was a matter of deep interest to the angels of God. The Cherubim, gazing down on the mercy-seat, symbolically represented the interest of angels, the Shekina, symbolizing the divine presence. But this divine presence was presented in its most effulgent form when God was manifest in the flesh.

Angels have played no inconspicuous part in carrying out the divine purposes and plans. They seem to have been, not only interested spectators, but conspicuous actors in the great drama of human redemption.

2. This interest was shown on numerous occasions as recorded in the New Testament history. (1) At the time of His birth an angel choir sang in the upper air, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men." They sang the first cradle song of the infant Redeemer, forecasting peace to men through the agency of him who was then sleeping as a babe in the arms of his virgin mother. We delight to think of the angels thus honoring the babe of Bethlehem, but it was not possible for them to reflect honor upon him, but rather they were honored by him whose advent they celebrated. (2) After Jesus had passed

through the temptations in the wilderness, and had been victorious over Satan at every point of his attack, angels came and ministered unto him, supplying his pressing necessities after the fast of forty days and forty nights. No more fitting time can be imagined for such angelic ministry. Jesus had triumphed over the blandishments of Satan presented in three of the most potent forms of temptation. He was exhausted in body by reason of the long fast, and through the mental strain superinduced by his wonderful experiences. He perhaps had come, for the first time, into conscious realization of the possession of miraculous power, for we have no account of his having exercised such powers up to that time. He was facing the mighty work that he came down from heaven to do, and it is at such a juncture that the angelic ministry is introduced. (3) At his transfiguration, Moses and Elijah, the giver and the restorer of the law, appeared from the other world and talked with him concerning his decease which was soon to be accomplished at Jerusalem. True, these were not angels in the sense of being unfallen spirits, but they were angels in an equally important sense, having been the great messengers of God to his people and agents in accomplishing the preparatory steps in the development of the great plan of redemption. (4) Angels announced his resurrection. They were the first preachers of one great fact of the gospel. The disciples of our Lord, when preaching his gospel, should feel themselves greatly honored in being permitted to stand in such a wonderful succession. The gospel messengers constitute a great line of heroes, beginning with the angel preachers at the open tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and ex-

tending down to the present time. (5) Angels accompanied the risen Saviour back to the courts of heaven, and as he ascended angels appeared and announced to the waiting disciples that the same Jesus that they had seen ascending would in like manner come again. It was an angel voice that commanded the gates of heaven to be lifted up and let the King of glory in. Angels responded to the challenge, and swung open the doors for the triumphal entry. Jesus was accompanied, doubtless, by those he had liberated from the unseen world. The inhabitants of heaven are represented as worshipping him, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing." We are also told that angels are not only interested in Christ, but in his disciples, and that they are sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. These wonderful facts give a peculiar significance to the clause, "Seen of angels," and invest it with a deep, far-reaching significance.

**IV. "Preached among the nations" constitutes the next item in the category.**

1. The saving of men through the preaching of the gospel was not a human conception. It did not originate in the human mind. It was not a plan developed by the aid of human reason. "The world by wisdom knew not God." The preaching of the cross is a divine, not a human, philosophy. Paul said that this preaching of Christ was "to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness." That is to say, it not only did not originate with men, but was contrary to the wisdom and judgment of men. True, we may dimly comprehend the

philosophy of the divine plan of saving men through the preaching of the cross after this plan has once been put into operation, but man did not originate it and could not in the beginning comprehend it, and even now perhaps our conception falls short of its deep, divine meaning.

2. To the Jew this system was incomprehensible, because it set aside the Mosaic institution as a medium of approach to God. It declared that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, that the law of Moses had been taken out of the way, and that the Jewish people no longer enjoyed exclusive prerogatives. This latter fact was a stumbling-block, even to Christ's apostles, and prevented them from carrying the gospel to the Gentiles in obedience to the commission, until Peter and Saul had been miraculously convinced of the universal character of the religion of Christ.

3. To the Gentiles the preaching of the cross was foolishness, because it fell entirely outside of the scope of human philosophy. The idea of saving men through a personal trust in a person, and that to one who had died an ignominious death, and was declared to have risen from the dead, seemed to be nothing short of silly nonsense, and yet Paul says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

4. Its efficacy, as a transforming and elevating agency, is shown in its practical results. True, many of our philosophers to-day cast it aside as unworthy of consideration, as did the Athenians in Paul's day, but the results achieved through nineteen hundred years of history demonstrate its power. No human system is comparable to it as measured by results.



No scheme of man's invention has ever approached it either in purpose or achievement. All that is blessed in our civilization to-day is the fruit directly or indirectly of the preaching of the cross of Christ. The best in literature, the best in ethics, the best in government, the best in art, the best in music are the results of Christian influence and sentiment. "Preached unto the Gentiles" means the setting in operation of the most salutary influence that has ever blessed mankind. \*

**V. "Believed on in the world" constitutes the next item in the enumeration.**

1. Faith is the fundamental necessity. It is the starting-point in every worthy undertaking. The farmer ploughs his field and sows his seed through faith. The merchant engages in his varied activities through faith. The mechanic plies his trade through faith. The professional man pursues his calling by faith. The traveler starts on his journey through faith; in fact, all the activities of the world are based on faith. Without faith, therefore, no man can please himself or please his fellowman.

2. Christian faith is a personal matter and that, too, in a double sense of the term. (1) It can not be performed by proxy; no one can believe for another. One man's faith may influence another to believe, but the faith itself is personal. No matter how earnestly one may desire to see another believe, he can do no more than to present the evidence upon which an intellectual faith can rest. Therefore, infant church membership, necessarily implying salvation without faith, is indefensible. (2) It is personal in its object. "Believed on" is the phrase, not "Believed about." We do not become Christians by believing

something about Jesus, and this is a matter that is often overlooked, even by the preachers of the gospel. Often we hear it said, the Christian faith is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but this is a mistake. The Christian faith is a personal trust in Jesus Christ, because he is the Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath life, not he that believeth something about the Son. He may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and not believe on him, and consequently not have eternal life. When we believe on the Son, we put ourselves entirely in his hands; we are under his authority and consequently must yield obedience to his commands, both in becoming Christians and in leading a Christian life.

3. We are not surprised, therefore, that the Scriptures make faith the starting-point. It is the first requirement. The commission of Christ sends men to preach the gospel for the sake of making people believers. Just as all worldly activities must begin in faith, so Christian life begins at that point. Neither is it a race or class matter. The obligation and necessity is just as wide as humanity, hence we are told, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." This does not mean that we are saved by faith alone. Salvation from sin, and the eternal salvation in the future world, depend on something more than faith alone. There are commands to be obeyed before there can be promises enjoyed, hence Christian faith is only the starting-point; it is not the end of Christian life.

4. It is something more than intellectual action. A person may believe a proposition intellectually, but to believe on a person calls for the exercise of

the affections. We can believe something about Christ intellectually, but we can not believe on him except through the heart. This phrase, "Believed on," is, therefore, very significant, and it explains the reason why so many believe something about Christ who never become Christians. Their faith has never reached the affections and desires which is always necessary to produce action. •

5. This faith results from the intrinsic qualities of the person believed on. Jesus had none of the things that men rely on to impress their fellowman. (1) He was born into a humble family and grew up amidst lowly surroundings. (2) He did not come to his work, at the age of thirty, from the schools. It had not been his privilege to sit at the feet of philosophers. He came from the despised city of Nazareth. (3) The men whom he selected as his apostles were all humble men. He did not call the wealthy and the powerful around him, but those whose opportunities for education had been limited, and whose worldly possessions were very small. Napoleon said, "God fights on the side of the heavy artillery." Jesus Christ, in the establishment of his kingdom, did not rely on the heavy artillery. If he is believed on in the world, it has not been on account of any of the accessories that the worldly great have relied upon.

VI. "Received up into glory" is the climax of statement in this wonderful enumeration.

1. As we have seen, Christianity is linked closely with the miraculous. Miracle was present at every stage of its development, until the kingdom had been established through the agency of the apostles. Those who are trying to eliminate miracles from

the Christian system, will, if they succeed, eliminate Christianity itself, but this will never happen.

The ascension of Christ was another instance in the long chain of miracles wrought in the development and establishment of his kingdom, and it was a necessary part of the divine plan. Man's three intellectual and spiritual needs are that of prophet, priest and king. Christ ascended to take his throne as king or moral ruler of the universe. When he took his seat God declared that he should reign until all enemies had been put under his feet. As Ruler of the moral and spiritual universe, he has not delegated his power to any one else. Nobody has any right or authority to legislate for him. He is supreme. Notwithstanding this, there is one, as Paul foretold, who "opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God;" in short, claiming divine honors and prerogatives. This wickedness and apostasy designated by the apostle as "the mystery of lawlessness," had even in his day begun to work, and its later development has been fraught with great mischief to the kingdom of God, but the day is coming when all opposing authority will be put down and Christ will be "All in all."

2. The ascension of Christ is an abundantly attested fact. It shows that it is an item of great importance in the divine scheme of redemption. It was typified in the Tabernacle worship. The high priest was a type of Christ, and when he went into the most holy place, once a year, with the blood of the victim to sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, he typified Christ's ascension into heaven to present his

own blood as a ransom for sin. The writer of Hebrews, referring to the Christian hope, says: "Which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." All this points unmistakably to the ascension and entrance of Christ into the most holy place, even heaven itself. Luke gives a description of his ascension in these words: "And it came to pass while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven." The same writer, in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, said: "And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." The description is minute, circumstantial and particular. All this was in perfect harmony with what Christ had told his disciples before he left the earth. He said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go I will send him unto you." Also: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." As we have

seen in one of the quotations, the angels that appeared to the disciples while gazing up into heaven at the ascending Lord, said, "He will come in like manner as ye see him go," thus corroborating the statement of Christ, that he will come again, and receive his disciples unto himself. Paul, in writing to the Romans, bears testimony to the ascended Lord in these words: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea, rather, that was risen from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." This teaches that among the functions that Christ is now performing for us, as he sits on his throne, is that of intercession. In writing to the Ephesians Paul referred to the ascension in these words: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This is a quotation from a passage in the 68th Psalm, prophetic of Christ's ascension. Peter bears this testimony upon the question: "Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." This not only teaches Christ's ascension and entrance into heaven, but asserts the supremacy that he there enjoys. This drops into line with Christ's own statement when he declared, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." The entrance of Christ into heaven was foretold in the 24th Psalm in this most picturesque and beautiful language:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory will come in.  
Who is the King of glory?  
Jehovah, strong and mighty,  
Jehovah mighty in battle.  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates,

Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors:  
 Yea, lift them up ye everlasting doors:  
 And the King of glory will come in.  
 Who is the King of glory?  
 Jehovah of hosts,  
 He is the King of glory."

The ascension and entrance of Jesus into heaven, therefore, stands substantiated. First, by type when the high priest entered into the most holy place; second, by prophecy; third, by the testimony of Luke; fourth, by the testimony of Paul; fifth, by the testimony of Peter; all falling into harmony with Christ's own teaching on the subject.

In conclusion it may be well to enumerate the items entering into the "Mystery of Godliness":

(1) The incarnation, or the manifesting of God in human flesh; involving a stupendous miracle.

(2) Justified in the Spirit; all the miraculous works of Christ being wrought through the agency of the Spirit.

(3) Seen of angels; everything connected with the scheme of human redemption being of interest to the angels.

(4) Preached unto the Gentiles; the saving of men by the simplicity of the gospel message being a matter wrought out through the divine wisdom and not through human wisdom.

(5) Believed on in the world; the redemption of man being accomplished through the operation of the principle of faith, which is an affectionate trust in a person who died and lives again.

(6) Received up into glory; the great preparation for the promulgation of the gospel message ending in a stupendous miracle. Indeed, great is the mystery of godliness.



## CHAPTER II.

### The Resurrection of Christ.

TEXT.—Psa. 16:9, 10: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This is a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ.

Jésus foretold his own resurrection:

Matt. 20: 18, 19: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again."

Acts 26:8: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

The question of immortality is one of deep interest and transcendent importance. The soul is thrilled with the thought of a life beyond the grave. Our friends have gone; are they living yet, or is death an eternal sleep? No question of like importance is ever considered. Eternal consequences hang upon the issue. Answer it in the affirmative and you open up to man the boundless possibilities of eternity. Answer it in the negative and man sinks, so far as destiny is concerned, to a level with the brute.

Surely in a matter of such stupendous importance the heavenly Father has not left us in ignorance. Surely the deepest question of the soul has not

been left unanswered. Surely this most insistent cry of the universal heart has not been disregarded.

**I. Let us first consider some arguments for immortality lying outside of the proofs for the doctrine furnished in the Word of God.**

1. It may be said that a belief in immortality amounts to a universal instinct. Forty centuries ago the Egyptians believed in it. All the great religions have taught it in some form. It seems to be a concomitant of the religion instinct. Such has been the faith of savage tribes in every part of the globe. The Indian buries implements with the body, which fact points to a belief in a future life. The ancient Persians believed in the resurrection of the body. This may have come by tradition, or it may have been instinctive.

The Jews certainly believed in it. The seven sons put to death, referred to in II. Maccabees, comforted themselves in the hope of resurrection. Sadducees and Pharisees were opposing sects, differing largely on this question.

Greek and Latin philosophers taught it; Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, Zeno, Virgil and the Latin teachers generally. True, the teaching was indefinite and shadowy, accompanied by an "if," but the longing was expressed in an unmistakable way; this is the significant fact. It may, therefore, be regarded either as growing out of the religious propensity, or as a sort of constitutional accompaniment of this universal instinct.

In view of this I say with Paul, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" All other constitutional cravings are met and satisfied, why not this?

2. The mystery connected with it is no argument against it. That I live at all is just as great a mystery and involves as great an exercise of divine power. If God by his creative power, through the laws that he has ordained, can bring it to pass that we live in this present world, shall we say it lies beyond his power to give us a life in a world that lies beyond? The mystery of a fact is never an argument against its reality, else we must needs deny the reality of everything in nature, for there is mystery everywhere. All life is a mystery; even the things we profess to understand end in mystery. We may discover the laws of gravity, but of gravity *per se* we know nothing; we may know something of the laws of vegetable and animal growth, but we do not know what the life principle is through which growth is made possible.

3. We do not attain full stature here. Our faculties point to a larger scope. A future life is demanded by the capacities of the soul. No one ever consciously reaches the limits of his possibilities. There is always a feeling that there are larger attainments that may be reached. Certainly this is true in the intellectual and spiritual realms. If human existence were limited to this world, surely some would have been found who had consciously attained the limit of growth.

4. Many are cut off at the very time they are ready to live to most account. This is an unaccountable thing, if there is no life beyond. Even those who reach their four-score years have but a brief time in which to exercise their God-given powers, and a large part of this brief span of life is consumed in the developing of the powers of body and soul—in

short, in getting ready to live. Strangest of all, multitudes are cut off in the midst, or at the end, of the preparation period before the time of service has commenced. This can only be explained on the theory of a future life.

5. Extinction of being is unthinkable. We can think our body away, but not our soul. That is a psychological impossibility. Here is, indeed, a strange thing; if extinction of being awaits every man, surely in the event of such an issue the mind of man would be able to grasp the fact, however unwelcome it might be. Nay, rather, would not God have so constituted the human mind that it could contemplate the idea of extinction with equanimity?

Our heavenly Father, in order that we might have a certainty, in a matter of so much importance, has given us a demonstration. Before the time of Christ, men were left to the deductions of reason. They reached a high degree of probability, but could not arrive at certainty. All that can be said amounts to nothing more than a probability, unless we have a positive demonstration. This demonstration is found in the resurrection of Christ. *Wagner*

**II. Let us then consider the proofs of the resurrection of Christ.**

Did Christ rise from the dead? On the answer to this question hangs the destiny of Christianity and the hopes of mankind.

1. The points not disputed should be enumerated.\* (1) There was such a person as Jesus of

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\* Gospel Preacher (Franklin), pp. 15-25.

Nazareth. (2) He lived at the time ascribed to him in the New Testament. (3) He was put to death under Pontius Pilate by crucifixion. (4) The body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. (5) A large stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre and a Roman guard was stationed (consisting, probably, of sixty men). (6) Upon the morning of the third day his body was missing from the tomb.

These facts were not disputed at the time of their occurrence, by either friends or foes, and they furnish the starting-place for this investigation.

2. There are but three possible explanations that will account for the missing body. First, that the friends of Jesus stole the body. This explanation was offered by Christ's enemies at the time. It is either true or it is the most plausible one that could be invented. If this explanation be true, the foundations are swept from under Christianity. Paul says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Ye are yet in your sins." The enemies of Christianity could have attacked the system at no more vital point. Right in the beginning, therefore, the issue was joined that meant life or death to Christianity. The apostles of our Lord well understood this, and consequently in their preaching they made this the most prominent item. Those to-day who are ready to surrender this doctrine, are opening a breach in the wall for the enemies of our faith to enter. If this doctrine is ever surrendered, Christianity will have been wounded to her death; but, please God, this will never be.

The second possible explanation is, that the enemies of Jesus stole the body. This theory was put forth in later times by the enemies of Christ.

In itself it stands as a confession that the first theory is untenable.

The third and only possible explanation, aside from the foregoing, is that Christ rose from the dead. This theory was put forth immediately after the body was missing, and has been maintained until the present hour. Let us consider these theories in turn.

(1) Did the enemies steal the body?

Men, when they perform a given act, are supposed to have a motive. Could the enemies have had any motive in stealing the body? On the contrary, was it not to their highest interests to see that the body was not stolen? This is almost conclusive in itself. The enemies had a very strong motive for guarding the body to keep it from being stolen, which they attempted to do, but none whatever for stealing it.

Furthermore, if the enemies had stolen the body, when Christ's friends put forth the claim that he had risen from the dead, which they did with great boldness, they would have convicted them of falsehood by producing the body. The enemies, doubtless, would have given much to have been able to produce the body.

Moreover, if the enemies had stolen the body, Christ's disciples would not have dared to promulgate the doctrine of the resurrection. They would have had no evidence of the resurrection, and would have evidently expected the body to be produced at any moment.

This theory is seen at once to be impossible, and hence the one advanced at the time by the enemies was the most plausible one that could be offered.

(2) Did Christ's friends steal the body? This theory fails:

First: Because the guards testify that the very thing happened that they were stationed to prevent. Notice they did not say, the disciples came and took the body by force. Such a claim would have been so manifestly absurd and ridiculous that it was not even hinted at.

Second: Because a whole Roman guard would not sleep at the same time. It was death, under the Roman law, for a guard to go to sleep on duty. If these guards had slept they never would have reported it, nor would they have been protected by the intercession of the priests if they had allowed that thing to happen which the priests were most anxious to prevent.

Third: Because a witness is incompetent to testify of that which happened while he slept. If they were asleep, how did they know the body was stolen? How did they know that the body did not rise?

Fourth: Because the circumstances made the stealing impossible. It was the time of the great feast of the Passover. Hundreds of thousands of people were in the city. All the available space in near proximity without the walls was occupied with tents and booths where people were accommodated with lodging. It was also the time of the full moon. To have stolen a body from a sepulchre in close proximity to the city, under such circumstances, would have been impossible.

Fifth: Because the disciples were too discouraged and terrified to have attempted to steal the body. All had fled; Peter had denied his Lord with curses. True, he wept bitterly over his cowardice,



but there is no intimation that he or any of the disciples recovered their lost faith prior to the resurrection.

(3) There remains, then, but one other explanation for the missing body; namely, that Christ rose from the dead. This was the claim of Christ's disciples, and from this they never wavered for a moment. They made it the central fact of their preaching.

3. An examination of this claim shows its impregnable character. In regard to it, but three suppositions are possible:

(1) They were deceived. They thought they saw Him, but did not. This supposition is untenable for the reason that the appearances of Christ after his resurrection are too numerous to admit of the possibility of deception. There are twelve appearances recorded. First, he appeared to the women on the morning of the resurrection; second, he appeared to the two disciples on the evening of the same day as they went to Emmaus; third, he appeared to the ten on the same evening as they were assembled in Jerusalem, Thomas being absent; fourth, he appeared to the eleven one week later, Thomas being present; fifth, he appeared to several on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and ate with them; sixth, he appeared to the eleven on a mountain in Galilee and gave his commission; seventh, he appeared to above five hundred brethren at one time; eighth, he appeared to James alone; ninth, he appeared to the eleven at the time of the ascension; tenth, he appeared to Stephen at the time of his martyrdom; eleventh, he appeared to Saul years after; twelfth, he appeared to John on

the Isle of Patmos, walking amidst the golden candlesticks.

During these appearances before his ascension, Jesus subjected himself to every possible test; he talked with his disciples, ate with them, told them to handle him. These disciples either saw Jesus or they lied. They certainly were not the victims of a deception.

(2) They were dishonest and deliberately set about to deceive. That can not be true for many reasons:

First: They had no motive for deception; they had nothing to gain, but everything to lose. By practicing such a deception their prospects were destroyed. All known motives that influence men would operate against a deception; loss of friends, loss of influence, loss of liberty, loss of property, loss of life, loss of self-respect. Can any one imagine that the disciples practiced such a deception at such imminent peril? Men may risk everything for the truth, a great reality, a real and permanent good, but who will do it for a lie?

Second: Their teachings were opposed to every form of deception and falsehood. They propagated the purest and best code of morals ever known. We must suppose them to have done this while practicing a gross deception. This is manifestly inconceivable.

Third: They gained nothing by telling it, if true, except peace of mind which duty well done alone can give. This explains their conduct; they had a great truth to declare which had wrapped up in it the highest hopes of mankind. Conscience forbade them to hide it. They felt as Paul did when he

said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." For the privilege of uttering the great truth of the resurrection they were willing to risk life and all that men hold dear.

Fourth: They began preaching at the wrong place to have been deceivers. Deceivers would not have commenced in Jerusalem; at Jerusalem the facts occurred. There all the evidence was at hand to disprove it if it were false. It is inconceivable that deceivers would have chosen Jerusalem as the place to begin the propagation of their monstrous deception.

Fifth: They were consistent to the end. When they found their story was likely to injure them, nay, even did subject them to the loss of all things, even life itself, did they ever recant? Did a single one ever weaken? When cast into prison for their testimony did they purchase liberty by retraction? No, never! They grew bolder and bolder. They declared the resurrection in the face of imprisonment and death. When Stephen was stoned, he lifted up his eyes and said, "I see heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

(3) There remains but one other explanation; namely, that Jesus' disciples told the truth; that Jesus rose from the dead. If that proposition is not proved, then it is impossible to establish any proposition by testimony. I consider the evidence absolutely overwhelming. This is why nearly all judicial minds accept the doctrine. Those who are accustomed to examining and weighing evidence, find this evidence absolutely conclusive.

Then I close with one of my texts, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God

should raise the dead?" Does it not answer the deepest question of your heart?

If this proposition is established, the claims of Christ are fully sustained. Paul said "that he is declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Then He is our Lord and Master. To him we owe all allegiance. No man who accepts this doctrine has any excuse for rejecting Christ. No man can be justified in rejecting this doctrine who has not given it honest, careful investigation.

This being the great citadel of the Christian faith, certain obligations are laid upon the disciples of our Lord respecting it:

(1) Every Christian ought to become thoroughly familiar with all the facts connected with the resurrection, or bearing upon it. He ought to be able to state the reasons for its great and fundamental importance.

(2) He ought to be so fortified with arguments that he can meet the objector and silence him by answer of facts and of inexorable logic. He ought to be able to make the resurrection of Christ as clear and certain as a demonstration in mathematics.

(3) He ought never to give aid or encouragement to professed Christians who deny the doctrine. To do so is to allow the enemy to encamp within our lines; to do so is treason to our Lord. Here no compromise is possible; here is a line of separation between the people of God and the world, which no Christian man may ignore.

## CHAPTER III.

### The Great Commission.

Matt. 28: 18-20: "And Jesus came to them [the eleven disciples] and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Marginal reading of the last clause, "The consummation of the age.")

Mark 16: 15, 16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

Luke 24: 46, 47: "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

John 20: 21-23: "Jesus, therefore, said to them again, Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent me even so send I you. And when he had said this he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Acts 26: 16-18: "But arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister, and a witness, both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may re-

ceive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." (Paul's commission.)

1 Cor. 15:1-8: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; that he was buried and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child but untimely born, he appeared to me also." (Paul's definition of the gospel.)

Rom. 2:6, 7: "But will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life." (Paul's statement of the final reward of the gospel.)

The great commission set forth in the foregoing scriptures ranks in importance with the wonderful statement of God recorded in the first chapter of Genesis: "Let us make man;" the latter relates to man's creation, the former to his redemption. If the making of man was a matter of great importance, the redemption of man is certainly no less so. For the announcement of the great commission the ages had unconsciously waited. Doubtless its importance, when uttered, was but dimly comprehended, and even to-day the disciples of our Lord fail to grasp its far-reaching significance. In it is wrapped up the highest good of the race for time and eternity. In this commission is contained not only the gracious purposes of God, but also, potentially, all benevolent schemes of man that can result in any permanent

good. That is, the carrying out of this commission in all of its details will result in every good that can possibly come to the human race.

In studying the great commission we will consider:

**I. The time when and the place where the great commission was first promulgated.**

After the fall of the first Adam, millenniums rolled by before the commission of the second Adam went into effect. Some have looked upon this as an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God; while others have cited it as an argument against the divinity of the Christian system. They say if Christianity is God's scheme for the salvation of man, why was it so long delayed? Why was sin allowed such a long and terrible development before God's remedy for sin was applied? The reasons for this delay are not hard to discover:

1. Man had to learn the nature and effects of sin before he would desire or accept an escape from it. The patient must learn that he is sick before he is ready to accept a remedy. This necessarily required the introduction of the time factor. It took ages for man to become acquainted with the awful effects superinduced by sin. He must live under all the varied conditions of human life to understand that the prevailing malady was universal. If it should appear that even one could escape, through favorable circumstance or condition, from the effects of sin, then superhuman help would not be a necessity; for what can be accomplished for one may be done for others.

2. Man must try his own remedial schemes.\*

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\*Talks to Bereans, Errett, p. 34.



He seems to be so constituted that he will not accept assistance at the hands of another if help lies within his own reach. To learn man's impotence, therefore, was a necessary lesson. Before he could learn this, he would naturally try such remedies as would seem to promise the needed relief.

(1) Historically considered, man first sought for wealth, material benefits and worldly splendor as the highest good; in this he sought happiness, blessedness and peace. He was restless, unhappy and felt the need of something to satisfy his craving, and thought that wealth would bring the coveted good. Great empires arose whose people madly followed after mammon as the true end of life. Wars of conquest were waged, that the victors might despoil the conquered. The material splendor of Babylon even yet excites the wonder of the world. But all this ended in failure.

(2) Man next sought wisdom or knowledge in pursuit of the *summum bonum*. Philosophy was tried as the remedy for human misfortune. This effort found its highest expression in the history of ancient Greece. Her philosophers even yet stand as the peers of the wisest in all the ages, but philosophy failed as a savior of the race.

(3) Man next sought the highest good in the development and application of legal codes. Law was tried as the corrective for human ills. The effort was made to secure perfect life through outward restraints. This, like all other attempts, ended in failure. It was the Roman nation that demonstrated the failure of human law as a regulator of life; and contemporary with this effort God showed, in the history of the chosen people, the impossibility

of securing the coveted result even through divine law.

These have been the prevailing lines along which the efforts of man have been directed for the salvation of the individual and of society, but they left mankind a hopeless wreck. After all human systems had done their best for man, and even after Judaism demonstrated its impotency, "There was none righteous; no, not one."

3. Certain lines of preparation had to be carried forward and completed before the divine plan for the salvation of man could be put into operation.

(1) There must be, first of all, a spiritual preparation; a standing-ground must be prepared for propagating the idea of "one true and living God" as opposed to the universal idolatry. This doctrine must be firmly planted in the hearts of a prepared people as a basis from which to proceed in the effort to transmit it to the entire human family. Then, too, in order to the introduction into the world of a new spiritual religion, a system of types and symbols representing the new order must be wrought out, which would create an expectancy of that which was coming, serve to identify the new institution when it should arrive, and give it authority. This was accomplished through the Hebrew nation.

(2) An intellectual preparation was also necessary for a universal religion. Grecian philosophy was the agent chosen for this work. While it did not and could not act as a savior, yet it did stimulate the thinking powers and furnish certain shadowy notions of immortality which served as a basis for Christian conceptions and ideas. Also, through the

agency of the Greek nation, a universal language, the common Greek dialect, was developed, which served as an important factor in the preparation for a universal religion.

(3) There must also of necessity be a certain physical preparation for the introduction of a world-wide system of redemption. The ambassadors of Christ would necessarily need protection as they went out under the great commission, and highways to the most distant provinces would be required in order to the successful accomplishments of their great mission. This physical preparation was accomplished through the great Roman nation, whose great highways made travel, hitherto difficult or impossible, comparatively easy, and whose protection, thrown around her citizens even unto the ends of the world, was of inestimable value to the heralds of the cross.\*

4. Certain facts, necessary to the redemption of the race, had to be accomplished. Whether we understand the philosophy of the vicarious atonement or not, is not important. It is important, however, to know that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments clearly teach the doctrine, and since the blood of animals could not atone for sin, it was necessary to find a sacrifice that was efficacious. God provided such an offering when he gave his only begotten Son, the just, to die for the unjust. It is evident that the facts of the gospel had to be accomplished before the commission could go into effect. We would also naturally expect that embas-

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\*For fuller discussion of the lines of preparation for Christ see the author's work, "The Great Salvation" chapter on "The Fullness of Time."

sadors would be selected for the task before a commission embodying a definite work would be given. It would be necessary for these ambassadors to grasp at least the great fundamental principles of the new kingdom that they should be appointed to usher in. We are not surprised, therefore, that the work of selecting and training his apostles constituted a large part of the personal ministry of Christ. The commission could not be given while this was in progress. Consequently, when the facts of the gospel had been accomplished and the training of the apostles completed, the commission was given and Christ ascended to take his seat on the mediatorial throne. However, he instructed his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be indued with power from on high, to enable them to accomplish their divinely given task. While the commission was given just before Christ left the earth, the execution did not take place until he had ascended to heaven and had sent forth the Holy Spirit in harmony with his promise. This took place on the first Pentecost after Christ arose from the dead. This promised power miraculously endowed his apostles for every task; it brought to their remembrance all things that Jesus had said unto them, which was necessary because full records of his teachings had not been kept in all probability, and it also helped them to work miracles in attestation of their superhuman mission, message and work.

The place where the commission was first put into effect is also a matter of interest and importance. Ages before, the prophet had said that the law should go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. God's law went forth

from Sinai, but this was confined to a single nation. The law for all nations was to go forth from Jerusalem. Consequently the disciples waited in accordance with the instructions of Jesus for the promised power, and it was in Jerusalem that their message of salvation was first uttered, immediately after the power was received. This fact shows forth in a striking way the divine wisdom. Jerusalem was the place where Christ had suffered. Jerusalem was the place where his enemies were strongest. Jerusalem was the place where fraud would have been most easily detected. Jerusalem was the last place that impostors would have chosen to begin their work. Beginning at Jerusalem is a strong testimony as to the truthfulness of the facts, and as to the honesty and sincerity of the apostles; such indeed as could have been given in no other way. Truth is always and everywhere absolutely fearless. It never hides in a corner. It never is afraid of honest investigation. Its challenge is: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Beginning at Jerusalem stamps the apostles with the label of honesty, and Christianity with the label of truth.

We will next consider:

II. The importance of the great commission, as shown by certain impressive facts.

1. The importance of a system sometimes depends in no small degree upon the personality of its author. What the author is, is sometimes of greater importance than what the author says. The importance of the personality of the author is determined by the character of his message. A bad man may utter truth of a certain kind that will not be affected by the fact of his personality. This is true

of philosophic truth generally. What a philosopher says is the important thing; not what he is. But when truth emanates from a great person, that fact invests it with peculiar interest, and the greater the author the greater the interest aroused. From great minds, men expect great things. There are, moreover, certain forms of truth that demand that the author shall be more than human; truth that is entirely outside of human experience and observation; truth that deals with the infinite and eternal; truth that only a superhuman being can know, demands a superhuman messenger if he profess to speak out of his own knowledge. The author of the great commission made the highest possible claim as to his personality. He claimed to be equal with God, to have come forth from God, to have the powers that belong to God; and he wrought miracles in attestation to those claims. The miracles, when classified, show that Jesus Christ possessed every power that we can conceive of as properly belonging to God. He spoke with a dogmatic assurance only permissible in God. He spoke things out of his own knowledge that only God can know; he exercised prerogatives, as, for instance, the forgiveness of sin, that belong only to God. Consequently the sentence introductory to the commission is a most natural thing, and harmonious in place and character. It is just what we would expect under all the circumstances. "All authority in heaven and on earth hath been given unto me." Then he is divine. Would God give all authority in heaven and earth into the hands of a fallible man? Reason revolts at the suggestion.

Christ makes his divine personality the bedrock of his church or kingdom. He says, "On this rock"

—that does not mean on the statement of a truth, but on his divine person—"I will build my church." This fact gives to Christianity an entirely unique and distinctive character. It is the only institution ever founded on a person.

2. The importance of a system is also shown by the beneficence and scope of its purpose. (1) The gospel of Jesus Christ proposes to cure all the ills that afflict the human race. It seeks to do this by striking at the root of all evil; namely, sin. Sin is the fruitful cause of all evil, physical, social and political; and to abolish sin would be to abolish everything that curses mankind. The entrance of sin into the world brought with it the long train of evils that have continued to afflict our common humanity, from the beginning down to the present hour: "Sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is the purpose of Christianity to abolish sin by removing from man the love of sin, by curing him of the practice of sin, and by relieving him from the guilt of sin. When some philanthropist or reformer has undertaken to cure some one great evil, such, for instance, as slavery or intemperance, or to relieve the world from the ravages of some great disease such as the white plague or diphtheria or yellow fever, or to institute some particular reform such as prison reform, or the abolishment of child labor from factories and mines, we honor him and call him great. General Booth is regarded as one of the world's great, practical reformers, because he undertook to lift up what he called the submerged tenth of the population of London. How all human schemes for the amelioration of human life dwindle



into insignificance when compared with the stupendous purpose of Christianity. (2) But not only does Christianity propose to abolish all evil, but it proposes to supply every needed want of mankind. It vacates no field. It says, I have much to do for the bodies of men. It seeks to cure the sick, feed the hungry and clothe the naked. It says, I have a mission to perform for the intellects of men! It has given us a new education by revealing to us the true unit of human greatness, the individual man, apart from the accidents of wealth or wisdom or power; by giving us the true analysis of man, and providing for the education or development of all the factors that enter into his complex being; by revealing to us the true purpose of education, which is service for mankind, rather than individual aggrandizement. It says, I have a mission to perform for the spiritual nature of man! It regards him not simply as a thinking animal, but a worshiping being. Recognizing the religious nature, it seeks to make proper provision for its growth and development by revealing the true object of worship—the one true and living God. This is done by bringing God down upon the plane of human life and action, and presenting him in concrete form, in the person of Jesus Christ.

When we consider the scope of the Christian purpose, we feel that the value of the system reaches far beyond the grasp of the human mind.

3. The importance of a system is also shown by the duration of the blessings it bestows. The benefits of all human systems are limited to time. Man is viewed as a citizen of this world only. Mr. Ingersoll said, "One world at a time!" This was a very

logical statement from his standpoint. Man, unaided by divine revelation, can only see one world, and all human systems must be confined in their purpose and benefits to this world. But it is very different with Christianity. It contemplates man as a citizen of two worlds, and consequently takes into the account the life that now is and the life that is to come. Its blessings cover the whole field of the present life, and stretch out to an infinite life that lies beyond. All human systems part company with a man when he drops into the grave. They say, "There is nothing more that I can do for him;" but Christianity proposes to accompany him through the dark portal of death and give to him an infinite life of blessedness and peace. It makes the present life merely a preparation for the life beyond, and admonishes us to live this life under the power and influence of the world to come. This fact gives to Christianity an importance infinitely greater than that which attaches to the most beneficent human system.

### III. The character and contents of the great commission next demand attention.

What was involved in the commission which our Lord gave to his apostles? In what did their work consist? To use a general term, they were sent out to preach the gospel. But the question arises, What is involved in preaching the gospel? What is the message that they were commissioned to declare? It may be helpful at this point to give a summary of the points involved in the great commission as stated in the Scriptures above quoted. Briefly the items are as follows: (1) The universal authority of Christ—that is, authority in heaven and in earth—

as the basis of this commission. This authority was inherent, hence Christ was divine. (2) The world-wide purpose of the gospel. (3) The duty of those entrusted with the commission to go unto all the nations with the message. (4) The message to be taught is called the gospel, which means good news or glad tidings. (5) The gospel consists of certain things to be believed. (6) These facts had been properly and amply attested. (7) Those who believe or have been taught are required to repent. (8) Those who believe and repent are also required to be baptized. (9) The remission of sins is promised to those who obey the requirements. (10) Remission of sins and salvation are used as equivalent terms. (11) Baptism is commanded in the name or by the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (12) The gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to those who believe and obey.

1. We notice in this summary that there are certain facts to be believed; the apostle Paul gives us the facts embraced in what he terms the gospel. We see that they are few and simple. He declares them to be: (1) The death of Jesus Christ for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that is, the Old Testament Scriptures. Bearing in mind that the word "gospel" literally means good news or glad tidings, we see that the clause "for our sins" is a very necessary part of the statement. The death of Christ alone would not be good news, but when coupled with the statement "for our sins" it becomes at once glad tidings. It points to a release from the guilt of sin through a sacrifice that was efficacious. (2) The burial and resurrection of Christ. Here again two clauses must be taken in conjunction in

order to constitute gospel or good news. The burial of Christ alone would not be good news, but when coupled with the statement that he arose again the third day, it becomes glad tidings. It points to the fact of a life beyond the grave, and consequently it is said that Jesus brought life and immortality to light. No messenger had ever arrived from that undiscovered country. Men yearned for something definite concerning a life beyond. Jesus had spoken most positive words of assurance on the subject, but his actual return after passing through the gates of death was a practical demonstration of the fact of immortality that he so confidently stated.

2. The gospel also consists of certain commands to be obeyed. The statement of the commission in the Scriptures above quoted show that these commands are three in number. (1) After preaching the facts just stated, Jesus commanded his disciples to require first of all faith in the message that they delivered. This involved faith in a divine person. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," in answer to the question of Christ, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven, and I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Therefore, the faith commanded is the faith in Jesus as a divine person. This faith places the individual upon the true and sure foundation, which Paul declared to be the only foundation, in these words, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which hath been laid, which is Jesus Christ." But this faith also involved faith in the

work that this divine person accomplished; namely, his death for our sins and his burial and resurrection. (2) We see also that repentance was enjoined, which logically follows faith. Faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not only calculated to produce sorrow for sin, but to lead man to change his mind with respect to a life of sin, in order that he may lead a life of righteousness. If man is not made sorry for sin and led to change his mind with respect to sin, and resolve to live a life of righteousness, by the preaching of the fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, there is no message that can be delivered to man that will produce this result. (3) We also see that baptism is a command involved in the preaching of the gospel. This is declared to be for, or in order to, the remission of sins; this does not mean that the individual is literally cleansed from sin by the waters of baptism, but it is rather a condition stated, upon which God promises to forgive. It is positive in its nature. There is no reason discoverable for obeying it other than the command of our Saviour; it is, therefore, a test of loyalty. If baptism were moral in its nature—that is, if it were a thing right in itself—it would not be a test of loyalty. But if man can not discover in baptism any moral quality, then the reason for his obedience must lie in his recognition of the authority of the one commanding it, and his disposition to yield obedience to that authority. We can, therefore, see how God can make this a condition of pardon. A man who is so loyal to Christ that he will obey his command even though he can see no reason for it other than his authority, shows that he is in a position to be received into

the family of God. Baptism has been appointed by God as the act or ceremony whereby he is formally born into the family, and thus receives the pardon of God.

3. The preaching of the gospel also requires the declaration, or promise, of certain blessings to be enjoyed. (1) The first blessing has already been referred to; namely, the forgiveness of sins, and no greater blessing is conceivable. Until a man knows that he is pardoned it is not possible for him to have peace with God, which is the basis of happiness. (2) The gift of the Holy Spirit is also promised, which is set forth in the Scriptures as the crowning blessing; in fact, that to which the whole Christian system leads. It is the marrying of the human and the divine. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart of the man, as a comforter and as a strengthening agent. Man is thus made partaker of the divine nature. This is the climax and end of creation. It is in the new creation that the great purpose of God is realized. It is in the second Adam and not in the first that man stands complete. (3) Through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit man is enabled to lead the life of righteousness and thus become a blessing to himself, and a blessing to the world in which he lives. Christian life is one of the highest blessings that Christianity confers. (4) But not only do the blessings of Christianity cover the life that now is, but they extend into, and are commensurate with, the life that is to come. The immediate fellowship with God and Christ and unfallen spirits, and with the good and great of all time through the ceaseless ages of eternity, is con-

templated as the final blessing to be proclaimed in the gospel of Christ.

Summing this branch of the subject up, we may say that the substance of the great commission consists in certain facts to be believed, in certain commands to be obeyed and in certain blessings to be enjoyed.

IV. The persons responsible for the execution of the great commission is a matter that should not be overlooked.

1. The commission was originally given to the eleven apostles. The record by Matthew is as follows: "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. But when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying:" Here follows the commission. Mark says: "And afterward he was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them that had seen him after he had arisen. And he said unto them:" Here follows Mark's statement of commission. This is sufficient to show clearly that the commission when uttered by our Lord was given to the eleven. Some years later when, according to the divine purpose, Saul of Tarsus was added to the list of the apostles, Jesus appeared unto him and gave him the same commission as recorded above. In order to demonstrate the divine mission of the apostles and enable them to establish his church, through the preaching authorized by the commission, miraculous power was conferred upon them. That this preaching of the commission was also done by others



in the apostolic day is clear from the record given us in the Acts of the Apostles, and upon some of these at least miraculous power was conferred, since they would need the same vindication and power, in the initiative stage of the work, that was given to the apostles. This divine power continued until the divinity of the apostolical message, that is, of the commission, had been demonstrated, and the kingdom securely planted. It ceased with the apostles and their cotemporaries.

2. The proclamation of the commission belongs to the disciples of the Master in all ages, for he said: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The miraculous power does not continue, or is not given to the preachers of the gospel now, because it is not needed. The divinity of the message is already established. The divine witness in the working of miracles and signs has been borne, and when once the testimony has gone on record it is not necessary to call up the original witness every time the gospel message is declared. Further, the extending of the kingdom can be accomplished, when once it has been planted, through ordinary means and channels. But the preaching of the facts embraced in the commission is a universal duty. All may not be called upon to proclaim the message publicly, but all can do it, and are called upon to do it, in private, indirectly in Christian living, and in support of those who give their time to its public proclamation. This is the fundamental duty of the Christian man; everything else he does is secondary and subordinate to this great work. This is the thing that should occupy his thought constantly. If he gives himself to other work, it is in order that

he may thereby be enabled to do the great work laid upon him by the head of the church. The Christian man who allows his business to interfere with the work of carrying out the commission has ceased to be a Christian man in the true sense of the word. It is the business of the local church, in its last analysis, to carry out the commission. Local work is incidental to and for the sake of the broad work, that of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. Church officers who study only the work that is purely local, have failed to understand their primary obligation. No man who is called into God's kingdom can shift the responsibility of assisting to carry out the commission of the Lord. Christian men are saved not only for their own sakes, but for the world's sake. When people make their own personal salvation the matter of highest concern, they have failed to grasp the divine purpose in their calling and election, and they have entirely missed the altruistic spirit of Christianity.

**V. The method or methods of executing the great commission should not escape our attention.**

1. We are told that: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." God in his wisdom has chosen to spread his kingdom throughout the earth by the proclamation of the message of salvation; that is, through the speaking of living men to living men. Let no one imagine that modern conditions and inventions have rendered the public proclamation of the gospel of less importance. Let no one think that anything can ever take the place of the original method. The personality of the preacher has much to do with his message, and this personality is manifested with greatest

power when the preacher stands before his audience and speaks forth the message. There is something in the manner, gesture, flash of the eye, intonation of voice, in short, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker, that sends the message home in a way that the printed page can not do. The public promulgation of the gospel by word of mouth will be the abiding method for the preaching of the gospel to the end of time.

2. But there are certain agencies that may be called into use that may greatly assist in the preaching of the Word. (1) The printing-press, by the printing of books, circulars, magazines and papers, renders valuable assistance in carrying out the commission of the Lord. While this can not take the place of the verbal proclamation of the gospel, it can render assistance that should not be despised. Occasionally, men are converted by reading the gospel message, but if we were to rely upon this agency alone, we would doubtless find that the progress of the gospel would be very soon arrested. It is also true that the gospel messengers may be greatly helped by books and periodicals, both in their personal qualifications and in their delivery of their message. All things considered, both direct and indirect benefits, the printing-press is indeed a mighty factor in this day and age in accomplishing the work laid upon us by the Master. Let us use it wisely and diligently, but do not let us imagine that the press can supplant, or make less important, the oral preaching of the Word. (2) The principle of co-operation is also valuable as a method of work; all can not go out as missionaries, either in the home or foreign field. Few men have the ability to support a

man for the work. Few churches, even, are able to support a missionary. Common sense demands that a way should be found for individuals and churches to co-operate together, and thus accomplish what single individuals and churches can not do. To say that we have no Scripture warrant for co-operation beyond that of members of the individual church, in the first place, is not true, for Paul himself acted as an agent in securing the co-operation of churches in a common work. In the second place, it shows a misconception of the genius and spirit of Christianity in that it demands a specific rule for the doing of everything connected with Christian life and work. It brings Christianity on a level with Judaism, making it a rigid system of law. In the third place, it is an impeachment of good common sense. Jesus said, "Go preach the gospel to every creature." He laid the obligation upon every Christian. But he did not specify the methods through which they should co-operate in carrying out the message. Failure in co-operation would mean failure to do the work enjoined. Organization is necessary, in order to large co-operation. The Master left his disciples to adjust their methods of doing the work to the ever-changing human conditions. As conditions change, old methods should be modified, and new methods will be introduced. The general principles of co-operation must be conserved, in order to the carrying of the gospel to the whole creation.

**VI. I desire for the sake of emphasis to specifically mention a work that is fundamental to the execution of the great commission.**

1. As a matter of fact, the preparation of men is a fundamental necessity, in order to obey the com-

mand of the Lord to preach the gospel to the whole world. Jesus teaches us this lesson by carefully training his apostles for their work before he gave them his commission. Paul took pains to prepare certain ones for the work of the ministry by associating them with himself in a great work. The training of man is a logical necessity, for man can not go and do successful work without the proper training, and churches can not send preachers and evangelists until they are prepared to go. Therefore, back of organization and co-operation lies the matter of preparation which has largely been overlooked; or, if not, it has been left to take care of itself. No systematic, organized work has been done by the church as such in the way of the preparation of men. The question is seldom mentioned in the pulpit, preachers have felt no obligation in the direction of securing an adequate trained ministry. They have understood it to be their duty to preach the gospel in order to bring men into the church, and, in a general way, to look after the spiritual interests of the churches to which they have been called to minister. But to feel any responsibility for the training of an adequate ministerial force has not been true of the average preacher of the gospel.

2. If the training of men is the logical beginning-place for the carrying out of the commission, the founding of schools and colleges is an important work that is laid upon the children of God. There never has been any agency to prepare man for the work of the ministry other than the college or university. It is safe to say that no way will ever be found other than this. As education becomes general among the masses, and educational standards

advance, it makes it necessary that the preacher of the gospel should keep pace with these advancing standards. A man utterly deficient in literary culture can not exert a very powerful influence over educated people. The education of the ministry has been, therefore, a growing work, both in character and scope. The college curriculum has been greatly broadened, necessarily so; this demands more men for teachers and more appliances of all kinds. All this increases the obligation to provide institutions of learning of such character as to meet the ever-increasing demands in this age of higher education. Here is a duty that has been largely overlooked by the masses of Christian people. Few have felt any personal obligation in the matter of supporting schools and universities. Few have made any sacrifice to that end. Has not the day come when there should be an awakening all along the line on this subject? Is it not time for every Christian to be made to feel that the duty of supporting colleges is a universal one? Is it not high time that the preachers of the Word should feel that they have been neglecting a vital, essential, fundamental matter, and that they should address themselves to this task for enlisting and preparing an adequate ministerial force as they have never done before? Let us then recognize the fact that co-operation in preparing men is just as essential as co-operation in sending men to do the work.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### Conversion.\*

Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

. 1. No event in all the history of the world is comparable in grandeur and importance to the introduction of the religion of Christ into the world. Nations have risen and fallen, empires and kingdoms have come and gone, great religions have been established and have passed away, but no achievement of man in government or religion, or in any other field of thought or action, bears any resemblance or holds any comparison to this stupendous event. The one denying the divinity of the Christian system has a hard task on his hands to account for the facts of Christianity as confirmed by the overwhelming testimony of friends and foes. The essential facts are not only substantiated by the testimony of all history, but are uncontradicted by any authority at the time and place of its introduction. Here stands forth the greatest miracle of the ages, resting not on divine authority alone, but on history. Tell us how a poor carpenter, without prestige or influence, could have accomplished what history shows was achieved immediately upon the

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\* For some of the matter in this chapter, and especially some of its illustrations, I am indebted to a sermon on conversion in "The Gospel Preacher" by Franklin.



introduction of Christianity into the world. His apostles were men of lowly station. They stood up in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life. They acted contrary to the Sanhedrin. They moved in opposition to paganism. Its wealth, power and influence were arrayed against them; yet in a few days after their leader had died an ignominious death they induced three thousand men to believe that God had raised that leader from the dead, and on another occasion, a short time after, they induced two thousand more to believe. Could such a thing be done now by twelve impostors? How did they soon after extend the gospel to Samaria, and in ten years to the Gentiles, and in forty years to the whole world? Here is a miracle of the most stupendous kind, yet infidelity asks you to believe a few ignorant men did it.

2. The manner in which this stupendous success was obtained is no less wonderful than the achievement itself. It was done, not by pandering to the pride or customs of the world; not by sympathizing with other systems; Judaism was set aside and paganism was held up as an abomination. The apostles included the whole world under sin, and taught that there was no name given under heaven or among men whereby men could be saved but the name of Jesus. He who can believe that twelve humble men could accomplish such results by such means, need not talk of the credulity of Christians. The history of the world does not furnish a parallel.

3. I hasten now to the case referred to in this text: Peter and John were going up into the temple. Two causes moved them; the natural desire to tell good news, and their divine commission said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every  
(5)

creature." When passing the "Beautiful" gate, they were greeted with the importunities of a beggar, lame from his birth. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." This miracle served a double purpose: it attracted the people, and proved the divine power of Peter and John. A crowd gathered and Peter preached, winding up with the words, "Repent ye, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out."

I. I desire first to examine the meaning of the Greek word "*strepho*," rendered "convert" in the old version.

1. The New Testament use of the word *strepho* is very different from the popular conception which makes the individual passive in conversion—in fact, incompetent to do anything until he is acted upon by an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. The original Greek word *strepho* occurs eighteen times in the New Testament, and is translated "turn," every time. This makes the turning an act of the individual, and hence it makes him responsible. In every instance, except Rev. 11:6, which speaks of turning water to blood, the person or thing turned itself. In other words, the person or thing is active and not passive in conversion, in the New Testament use of the Greek word.

2. Let us next look at the compound form *epi-strepho*. This word occurs thirty times. The Revised Version translates all but two cases by the word "turn." These cases are found in Jas. 5:19, 20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one *convert* him, let him know that he which *converteth* the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death,

and shall hide a multitude of sins." It will be seen that in both of these cases the word might just as well be translated by the word "turn." We, in short, get the same idea that we do from *strepho*, only somewhat strengthened by the prefix *epi*.

There is nothing in the word to indicate which way the turning is—whether from good to bad or from bad to good. The word may be properly used with reference to either kind of turning. I hold, therefore, that the conclusion is irresistible that "turn" is the proper meaning of the word, and that a converted man is simply a turned-around man. *Epistrepho* means to turn upon, or, in other words, to take the back track, to set the face in the opposite direction. The turning is ascribed to various persuasive influences according to the purpose of the writer. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the preacher, are each represented as the agents in producing the turning, but the man himself is always the immediate, active cause.

3. The reasons for rejecting the popular theory, that makes the individual passive, are cogent: The popular theory of conversion destroys human responsibility. It is dishonoring to God, since it makes him partial and unjust. It also dishonors man by reducing him to a level with the inanimate world. It makes him a mere machine, acting entirely from outside, irresistible force. It matters not if the outside force is divine, so long as man has not the power to resist it.

That this very plain and simple subject should be so grossly perverted, is a matter of profoundest regret, and we may well rejoice that more scriptural conceptions are rapidly gaining ground.

II. I am led to consider next what is involved in the process.

1. Conversion, or turning to God, involves three distinct divine changes. In order for us to understand what these are, we must keep in mind what is necessary in accomplishing this work. Beginning with a sinful man: first, his heart must be changed; second, there must be a change of life, which is logically preceded by a change of life purpose; third, there must be a change in state, or relation, to God. The man who is changed or turned in all these ways is a converted man in the New Testament sense. There is no other change conceivable, pertaining to conversion. He loved sin, he now loves righteousness; he practiced sin, he now practices righteousness because his life purpose is changed; he was in the kingdom of Satan, he is now in the kingdom of God's dear Son. This is certainly a true and complete conversion.

2. There are three distinct divine appointments for the purpose of accomplishing these three distinct divine changes. God has appointed faith to change the heart, repentance to change the life, and baptism to change the state. The first two changes are not arbitrary appointments of God, but necessary, growing out of a psychological demand on the part of man. There is never any change of heart without change of faith; that is, without a new belief. Faith in Christ is psychologically suited to change man's affection, or love for sin, to love for righteousness. The second appointment is also necessary. Change of life must always be preceded by change of life purpose, or motive. This is repentance. *Metanoia* is a change of mind with respect to sin, brought about by sorrow for sin, and leading to a reformation of life. It is a mistake to look upon the requirements of the gospel as mere arbitrary commands. We may next inquire,

what is demanded when it comes to a change of state or relationship to God? Here God must speak. We can not dictate the mode of transference from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. If God admits us into his kingdom, it is his prerogative to name the conditions. This he has done. He says a person prepared by faith and repentance may come into his kingdom by baptism. We are baptized into Christ. We do not believe or repent into Christ, but these acts prepare us for being baptized into Christ. That baptism has moral and spiritual aspects, is a question that need not be discussed in this connection.

3. Notice that each item must keep its proper place and do its own work. Faith does not change the life, but it changes the heart. Repentance does not change the heart, but it changes the life. Baptism does not change the heart or life, but it changes the state. These three items in conversion can not be reversed or changed in order. Life can not first be changed and then the heart, nor can state be first changed and then the heart and life. The order named is the Scriptural and psychological order.

• III. I next raise the question, "What is the true meaning of each of these changes?"

1. Let us address ourselves to the meaning of change of heart. What is the matter with the unregenerate human heart? It loves sin, and does not love God. To be changed, it must cease to love sin and learn to love God. Instead of hungering after sin and pleasure, the heart must hunger and thirst after righteousness. In most cases, the experiences that men tell are simply the changes of heart they have experienced. Does any one say, are experiences to be condemned? Certainly not, provided they are not made

to mean too much. Often this is the case. They are sometimes made to stand for the whole process of conversion, and are even regarded as evidence of pardon. Change of heart may take place when there is no change in life or relation or impartation of the Holy Spirit. Faith produces this change, and we may best understand this by an illustration. First scene: Take the case of a man of middle age who has prospered in business. He has fine stock and bets on them in large sums. When he drinks he goes to elegant saloons, and he never swears. He is a true gentleman in a worldly sense. He attends fairs, attends theaters, attends balls, assists to build churches, asylums and schools. He never goes to church except on rare occasions. He has no use, personally, for preachers, Bibles or churches.

Second scene: In the midst of all this his idolized child sickens. Every effort is made, but in vain; the child grows worse; there is anxiety, then foreboding, then despair and death. All seems a blank. What plans are destroyed! His bosom heaves; down he sinks, overwhelmed with grief. Arrangements for the funeral are made; the coffin, cemetery, grave, crowd upon him. He now finds use for a preacher; the sermon is preached; his heart has suddenly become tender. The preacher says, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Awful question! He meditates and sees his folly. The funeral is over. He and his wife hunt up the passage and weep over it. He goes to church and hears the words, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." He can scarcely wait for next Lord's day to go to God's house.

Third scene: Some one asks him to attend races,



or the ball, or the saloon. "No," he answers, "I have no desire to go." Now I ask, "Is this man's heart changed?" Certainly. He hates what he loved, and *vice versa*. Is this man pardoned? It certainly is a mistake to regard such change as evidence of pardon. Pardon is not a change in us. It takes place with God. We only know it when the fact is communicated to us. Change of heart is not pardon, but simply a preparation for pardon.

2. We now come to another divine change; namely, change of life. All heart changes are useless unless change of life results. Repentance does this. It is change of mind or life purpose. Repentance can not change the past. It looks to the future. It determines the life that is yet before. In the case above cited, the change of heart would logically lead to a change of life purpose, and this to a changed life.

3. God proposes simply one more change—change of state, or relation. He proposes to take the man with changed heart and changed purpose into a new relation: Rom. 8:15, "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" Gal. 4:4, 5, "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" Eph. 1:5, "Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ himself."

Up to this point, this adoption has not taken place. The change has been in man; there must be an adopting act, and God has instituted baptism for this purpose, at least in one of its aspects. The Scriptures declare we are baptized into Christ, baptized into one body, "baptized into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Notice that baptism does not change



heart or life. This accounts for the fact that there are many good people who have not been baptized, and *vice versa*. This does not mean that the one changed in heart should not be baptized, but the contrary. It does mean, however, that to put baptism first is a logical, psychological and theological mistake.

Perhaps some one may say, "What is meant by change of state?" It is simply the entering into God's church or kingdom, which is composed of prepared persons. Those whose hearts and purposes are changed, change their kingdom. Baptism is the visible act by which a man passes from one kingdom to the other. Such a man is saved. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God." A very common illustration will make this plain: Marriage involves three changes: change in heart, purpose and relation. Marriage dates from the last change. It involves a ceremony of marriage, and if one stops short of this, he is not married.

"But," says one, "I hold it to be impossible for one to believe or repent until he is operated upon by the Holy Spirit to enable him to do so." I am willing to admit that God gives faith; yea, that the Holy Spirit gives faith. This is not done, however, by an immediate action of the Holy Spirit. God and the Holy Spirit have given us the gospel in order to produce faith. Hence, Paul says; "This people's heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and turn, and I should heal them." Again, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The gospel is called "The Sword of the Spirit."

If we will keep separate the part each item performs, we shall have no trouble. Faith prepares man for God by changing his heart, repentance leads to changed life by changing purpose of life, baptism changes the state of one previously changed in heart and purpose. Pardon takes place with God. The abiding gift of the Holy Spirit is the culmination of the whole process, and is the climax of divine grace.

There are some who doubt their change of heart. They imagine that it is not of the right kind. Through erroneous teaching they have been led to expect some peculiar change that will be manifested by some unique feeling, physical or otherwise. An illustration will help to make the whole matter plain. A young man, we will say, ran away from home and went to California. He lived a wild, reckless life; did not write to his father or mother, and the longer he staid away and the more reckless he became, the more certain he felt that his father and mother had ceased to love him or take any interest in him. He is finally found by an acquaintance, who tells him that he was sent out by his father to search for him and find him and induce him to return to his father and mother, who are yearning for him. He is led to address a letter to his father, and in reply his father says: "We have sought you and spent sleepless nights and unhappy days thinking about you. Even while I write, your mother sits by and weeps, imploring you to return." He believes, his heart is changed; his whole view of his father has undergone transformation. He returns home and is received and pardoned. Is there any doubt as to whether or not he had the right kind of heart change? So you may determine this great ques-

tion. If you decide to return to the Father's house, you have the right kind of change of heart.

God does not wait for you to knock; he sees you coming. He has written you a love letter. Nay, more, he has sent Jesus after you, who warns and pleads. We are assured that our sins and iniquities he will remember no more. He will not allow them even to be mentioned.

By His love, compassion and tenderness I entreat you. By the pleadings of Jesus and the wooing of the Spirit I entreat you. Turn ye! turn ye! for why will ye die?

## CHAPTER V.

### **The Conversion of the Three Thousand.**

Read Acts 2:22-42 as a preparation.

TEXT.—Acts 2:33: “And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The Book of Acts is a very interesting and important book, because:

1. In a certain sense it is the first book of the New Testament. All the events recorded in the first four books happened under the Mosaic dispensation. This gives us the first history of the new dispensation; it gives us an account of the establishment of the Church of Christ, and shows how the apostles preached and acted as they went out under the great commission.

Jesus Christ lived and died under the law. When he died on Calvary the law expired by limitation. It is said he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Then it follows that his personal ministry was accomplished while the law of Moses was still in force.

The Book of Acts is the first New Testament book, because it is the first book to record New Testament history. The four books that precede are New Testament books in the sense that they record the history of Christ, who was the Mediator of the new dispensation, or testament, and they enunciate the grand, fundamental principles of the new institution, but the history recorded happened under the old dispensation.

2. It is a book of conversions. It shows us the process by which men were made Christians under the apostles' ministry by giving us many examples of conversion. We are thus enabled to compare the several cases and see wherein they agree or disagree.

3. The subject of conversion is very important because it involves the destiny of the individual for time and eternity. Hence, it will ever arrest and hold the attention of men.

In some respects, the case of conversion recorded in the second chapter of Acts is the most interesting of all because it is the first case of conversion accomplished after Christ's ascension and coronation. These converts formed the first church of Christ, or, in other words, here the church began. This must invest it with singular interest.

Beginnings of things are always interesting, and their study is fruitful in results. No man who seeks to understand an institution will fail to study its beginnings.

In studying this case of conversion, our attention is called to:

**I. The time when and place where the event took place, and the person who officiated.**

1. It was on the day of Pentecost, which was the time demanded by the type. Moses was the mediator of the first covenant, which was promulgated from Sinai fifty days after the first Passover. This first Passover was eaten on the seventh day of the week, which afterward was set apart as the Sabbath, thus commemorating the day of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The fiftieth day after the first Passover Sabbath was designated as the day of Pentecost, and it commemorated, among other things, the giving of

the law from Sinai, and it always came on the first day of the week, since the fiftieth day after the Pass-over Sabbath would fall on the first day of the week. Christ was the antitype of Moses, and the Mediator of the new covenant, which should have been promulgated on Pentecost fifty days after the paschal Sabbath of the week in which Christ was crucified, according to type. Consequently the new law that went forth from Jerusalem, being promulgated on Pentecost and the first day of the week, fulfilled to the letter the type furnished in the giving of the law by Moses. The true paschal lamb, Jesus Christ, lay three days in the grave. Fifty days after the Sabbath of the week in which he was slain the time expired, and the new law was given. Thus, the first day of the week commemorates both the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the new law.

2. It was at Jerusalem, which was the right place. The prophet Jeremiah had declared six hundred years before, that the new law should go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The instructions of Christ fully accorded with this. After giving his great commission, he said, "Tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high." Also the commission, as recorded by Luke, said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." This was, therefore, the right place for the first promulgation of the new law.

3. The right person did the preaching. The record says, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice." Why not James, or John, or Matthew?

The reason is clear. Jesus on one occasion propounded to his disciples a great question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" They answered, "Some say thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others. Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He saith unto them, "But who say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven, and I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Jesus here declares that he will build a church and that he will give unto Peter the keys, which means, doubtless, the authority to open the door, or declare the terms of admission into the church. Hence, Peter was the right man to admit the first citizens into the kingdom, and we find that he was the one who opened the door to the Gentiles at the household of Cornelius at a later time.

It is wonderful to note the complete agreement between prophecy and fulfillment in all that pertains to Christ and his kingdom. The one who maintains that all this is mere coincidence, shows a perversity that is amazing.

## **II. The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit.**

The description is very vivid. In harmony with Christ's instruction, the apostles were waiting in Jerusalem for the promised power. The record says: "They



were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house ~~where~~ they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues, parting asunder, like as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

1. The first question to be decided is: Upon whom was this miraculous gift of the Spirit conferred? Either upon the twelve or upon the one hundred and twenty, and it seems to me the description of the whole event indicates the twelve. Verse 26, chapter 1, reads, "And they gave lots for them; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered among the eleven apostles." The next verse (2:1) reads, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place." It seems to be the same "they" referred to as casting lots to fill the vacancy caused by the fall of Judas. But even if it still be contended that the one hundred and twenty were recipients of the blessing, it will be seen that the outpouring was not general, but confined to a limited number.

There is a clear distinction between the gift of the Holy Spirit, carrying with it miraculous power, and the gift of the Spirit promised as an abiding guest in the Christian heart. The former was always special, conferred for a specific purpose, and never given as an individual blessing. The latter was an abiding presence to comfort and strengthen the individual, and did not carry with it miracle-working power.

2. What was accomplished by the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit is an important question. Jesus, before he left the earth, said (John 16:7-11): "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not

away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go unto the Father and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."

(1) We learn then that the coming of the Spirit convicted the world of sin in rejecting Christ. This coming demonstrated that Jesus was the true Messiah, and in rejecting him, the world was guilty. The sin, according to Christ's explanation, is not sin in general but the specific sin of rejecting Christ. "Of sin, because they believe not on me." This applied directly to those who rejected Christ when he was here. When the Spirit came, according to Christ's promise, it justified Christ and consequently condemned those who rejected him. Its coming also condemned those in all time who would reject him. By the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, the world to-day is condemned for the sin of rejecting Christ.

(2) The second item in the Spirit's work is to convict the world of righteousness. Here again we have Christ's own explanation. It was not the righteousness of the world, nor any portion of the world, but of Christ; "of righteousness, because I go to the Father." The Jewish Sanhedrin had sat in judgment on Christ, and had condemned him for unrighteousness. He was declared to be a blasphemer. Christ carried his case to the highest court in the universe, and by the coming of the Spirit, in accordance with his promise, his acceptance with God is declared, and his righteousness made manifest. In other words, the decision of the Jewish court that condemned Christ is reversed at the

Supreme Court of the Universe. If the Spirit had not come, we would not have known that Christ had reached heaven and had been accepted of the Father. Now there is no excuse for denying the righteousness of Christ, and those are convicted who do so.

(3) The third part of the Holy Spirit's work in behalf of the world was to convict it of judgment, and here again Christ guards us against misunderstandings. "Of judgment, because the prince of the world is judged." It is not the judgment of the world, nor of wicked men, but of Satan, the prince of this world. Christ, in his death, grappled with Satan, and wrenched the keys of death from his grasp. The conqueror is at last conquered, and his final judgment has commenced. By the coming of the Spirit, Christ's complete and lasting victory is fully guaranteed, and the final overthrow of the powers of darkness made sure. Now the world is called upon to transfer its allegiance to a new sovereign through the proclamation of the gospel. The beginning of the end has come. From henceforth Satan's kingdom shall decline until the final overthrow, and the kingdom of Christ shall increase in strength and power until its final victory. Then shall the kingdom be delivered up to God, the Father, and the Son himself shall become subject, that God may be all in all.

(4) It also gave evidence of the verification of Christ's promise. He had said, "He that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, but this he said of the Spirit, that they that believe on him should receive." This wonderful promise was now about to be verified, as Peter's sermon will show. Peter promised remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit on plainly expressed conditions. The visible signs gave full evidence that the new spiritual presence

promised to the believers was now to be realized. In other words, it gave assurance that the promise of Christ, now about to be reiterated by Peter, was a veritable truth.

(5) A special work was accomplished for the apostles by the miraculous power conferred by the Spirit. They needed power: power to remember all Jesus had taught them and understand it. Jesus had told these followers of his that when the Spirit came he would bring to their remembrance all things that he had told them. They needed power to pierce the heavens and know what was going on there, and this was conferred, as the sermon of Peter presently showed. They needed vindication in the eyes of the multitude that their message might be accredited, and this was done in the gift of tongues that enabled them to speak in all the languages represented in the miscellaneous crowd gathered at Jerusalem.

3. It may help to a better understanding to note in conclusion what was not accomplished by the miraculous outpouring. It did not directly communicate faith or result in conversion. It was a gift conferred on the twelve, or on the hundred and twenty, at most, and these already believed. They did not need conversion, as they already occupied the right relation to Christ. To have converted them would have turned them away from Christ. The conversion of the three thousand, that soon after took place, was accomplished by the preaching of the gospel, as we shall presently see. It hence follows that the miraculous features of Pentecost were special and extraordinary, growing out of the exigencies of the occasion, and must not, therefore, be regarded as permanent, characteristic features of con-

version, nor with the gift of the Spirit soon after promised by Peter.

**III. The sermon that Peter preached, which was the first gospel sermon ever proclaimed.**

1. He first carried their minds back to prophecy. In this the relation of Christianity to Judaism crops out beautifully. Christianity fulfills Judaism. Jesus said, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished." It fulfilled it as the man fulfills the boy; as the noon fulfills the dawn; as the antitype fulfills its type. Jesus Christ fulfilled Judaism by fulfilling its prophecies, both verbal and pictorial, and accomplishing the great purpose for which Judaism had been instituted.

2. After laying the foundation in prophecy, Peter begins the sermon proper, with the words, verses 22-24: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." There is no effort to make the hard, bitter facts more agreeable. Even the despised name of Nazareth is not withheld. This is the language of a brave man. We almost wonder if this can be the same Peter who denied his Lord with cursings a short time before. May we not conclude, in view of Peter's boldness, which never after this time forsook him, that Peter had come into possession of the

new spiritual presence which Christ had promised would come after his departure from the earth? "If I go away, I will send the Comforter unto you." He certainly, with the other apostles, enjoyed the gift of miraculous power, but this had been enjoyed before the crucifixion of Christ.

Peter makes seven points in his sermon, and in so doing gives an epitome of the four Gospels, which may be summed up as follows: (1) That Jesus had been approved among them by miracles. (2) That they knew this to be true. (3) That it was not from impotence on his part, but according to divine purpose, that he was delivered into their hands. (4) That they had put him to death when thus delivered. (5) That they had done this wickedly, thus charging them with sin. (6) That God had raised him from the dead. (7) That death could not hold him. Jesus had said, "No man takes my life from me; I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

The three great fundamental facts of the gospel came out in this sermon which agrees with Paul's definition, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you. Which also ye have received and wherein ye stand. By which, also, ye are saved, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." The last fact must be joined with the second to make it gospel or good news.

3. Peter, then, in a masterly way, clinches the whole by showing that David in prophecy declared



it all. The climax is reached by making David's words, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet," refer to Christ's exaltation.

4. Note next the effect produced: "Now when they heard this they were pierced in their hearts." This piercing was the result of the consciousness of sin; Peter had sent the dart home. They cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter had spoken of a possible salvation in Joel's language. This was the first time under the reight of Christ the question was ever asked, but it was not the last time. It has been, and ever will be, the standing question of those burdened with consciousness of sin. There is no question of like importance, nor one that demands a plainer or more unequivocal answer. We may well pause to listen to the inspired answer given the first time the question was asked.

5. Let us then notice the answer to the most important question ever propounded: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Here is God's offer of pardon on plain conditions. The important clause is, "In the name of Jesus." Baptism is nothing unless done in deference to Christ's authority.

The fact that Peter did not mention faith as a condition of salvation is very easily understood. The question came after the sermon, after the people had heard and believed. Peter's answer found them just where they were; they already had faith, that is, they believed Peter's testimony concerning Christ. The



next step was repentance; hence Peter said, "Repent and be baptized."

The meaning of repentance comes out clearly. It is not sorrow, for they were commanded to repent after they were made sorry, but it is change of mind produced by sorrow and leading to reformation of life, of which baptism was the first overt act.

6. A great promise follows; namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was the crowning blessing, and embodied the purpose of the Christian dispensation. This is for all Christians: "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." It is distinct from the miraculous outpouring. That was special; this, general.

All this exactly accords with the other conversions, as we shall see as we examine them. They heard, believed, repented, obeyed, and enjoyed the promise. So it always is.

Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then this command comes to you. To neglect it is to despise God's mercy and reject his offer of pardon. To accept it is to receive the greatest boon a mortal can know and rejoice in the greatest gift a man can have.

## CHAPTER VI.

### The Conversions at the Temple.

Read Acts 3-4: 22.

TEXTS.—Acts 4: 13, 14: "Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."

Acts 4: 4: "But many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

1. Christianity has much to do for the bodies of men; herein the church is guilty of a great oversight. Christianity is rightfully regarded as a spiritual system, and Christ as a spiritual king, yet Christianity has a mission to perform for the physical man. Its mission is, in part, the development and care of the body. Christ spent much of his time in caring for physical needs. Were men hungry, he fed them; were they sick, he healed them. He reached the soul, not by disregarding physical wants, but through care for physical necessities. The same attention was paid to physical needs in the work and teaching of Christ's apostles. The need of the widow and orphan was not overlooked; the distress of the poor was not forgotten. The Christianity of the apostolic day was not a mere sentiment, a singing of songs and manifestation of ecstatic feeling, but it was a very plain, every-day matter. It dressed

in every-day, working clothes, and met people on the streets, in the market-place, and entered into helpful fellowship with them. It went into the hovel of poverty, the chamber of the sick, into every needy situation of men, no matter what the nature of the need, and extended a helpful hand. It said, whatever affects men can never be a matter of indifference.

2. The church that overlooks the wants of the body will not be trusted to deal with the wants of the soul. In our day men will ever reason from the lower to the higher. To be careful in the least is to give assurance of carefulness in the greater. This is a divine principle of action. "If God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The church that looks after the bodies of men will get a hold on the hearts of men that it will be hard to break, and the day is at hand when the church that disregards the every-day needs of the physical man will have the contempt it so richly deserves. The time has come when Christianity must thrust itself in everywhere and solve every problem that deals with human needs.

I. This Book of Acts, like the Bible of which it is a part, is true to life as shown in the contrasts it presents.\*

1. Life is made up of extreme and opposite experiences brought close together. To-day we laugh; to-morrow we weep, and *vice versa*. To-day we are on the mountain-top; to-morrow we are in the valley. God gives us one day in seven for the mountain experience; six days for the experience of the valley. God

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\*Parker's Apostolic Life, Vol. I., pp. 80-104.

gives us some moments when we stand on the summit of the mountain and in the clear sunlight that beams from his throne, but many moments when we stand in the shadows and darkness, when, were it not for the faith begotten by the mountain experience, we would give up in despair. The sunshine and shadow are mingled, yet sharply defined. See the contrast here presented in the events recorded in the second chapter and the opening of the third chapter of Acts. Intense action is followed by quiet service. How true this is to life. It is but a step in life from one extreme to another.

2. In this is a deep lesson; one kind of experience will not develop men. It takes sunshine and shadow, storm and calm, to make a man. A life of ease, of great luxury, is a dangerous life. Such a life is a misfortune. Such a life destroys a man's chances. It gives him no opportunity to develop moral fiber; no favorable time to produce spiritual muscle, so to speak. The sterling virtues, the nobler qualities of manhood, are born in travail and pain. "These are they that have come up through great tribulation," was prophetically said of the redeemed in heaven. That is the only way to get up in this world. The man who relieves his child of the necessity of effort, struggle, sacrifice, takes away his chance of becoming a man.

We need Pentecost; we need the day of excitement; we also need the ordinary routine service, the hour of prayer. Luxuries are good, but bread is necessary. Here is a danger. Some can not come down to the ordinary. Peter and John were present on Pentecost, yet they went up into the temple at

the hour of prayer. The excitement of Pentecost did not destroy their taste for commonplace duty.

3. Here is where the church fails to-day. Some are on hand in the church on the Pentecost occasion; where are they to-morrow? Not in the temple at the hour of prayer, nor yet ministering to the needs of suffering, needy men.

We need more routine workers. We read in the religious papers of multitudes being converted; where are they to-morrow? True religion takes men to the temple. This we must have. We do not go to church to get religion, but because we have it, and do not want to lose it; we go to get closer to God, so we may get more of his strength for the battle of to-morrow; we go to get a better understanding of God's viewpoint, so we may see and understand the true reality, the real duty, the supreme business of the hour. This points to the business of the preacher. He has two things to do when in the pulpit: hold up Christ as the supreme need of the soul, and tell Christian men how they can best relieve the present distress and supply the present need, and this will be determined by the ever-changing conditions. It is the preacher's business to take the old principles and bring them to the solution of the new problems.

**II. This particular incident reveals the greatness of ordinary service.**

1. Men make great mistakes in looking on ordinary service as a commonplace matter. "Life is real, life is earnest." To do one's duty is great, but of all duties, what is greater than prayer? I fear we miss the meaning of prayer. It has become a

lot of set phrases, a performance, a mere routine, or, worst of all, an elocutionary exercise.

I sometimes hear men speak of eloquent prayer, of a man gifted in prayer because of his smooth, high-sounding sentences. It is a wonder God does not smite men dead for such blasphemy. Prayer expresses an intense yearning, an ardent desire; it is the utterance of a soul overwhelmed with a conscious need. It knows nothing about rhetoric, or well-rounded periods. It is the cry of a soul conscious of hunger, of its own littleness and unworthiness, and of the majesty, greatness and goodness of God.

2. Can everybody pray? May every one pray? Some say they can not pray; this is a great mistake; some think they can not, but they can at least pray sympathetically if they will. Their souls can ride to heaven on the wings of somebody's petition even if their own tongue refuses utterance. Potentially, everybody can pray, and actually everybody will pray. Some will pray when the sun shines, but others will wait till the storm comes down upon them, but sooner or later all will pray; if not before, when the King comes in all his glory. Of one thing be assured: true prayers pass through the heart and are wet with the heart's blood; and know, too, that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

3. Every true prayer is a step Godward. Peter and John were on high ground when they went up to pray; may we not say as high as they stood amidst the wonderful experiences of Pentecost? The Pentecost experience was great, but the temple experience was equally great. The routine, every-day

service is indeed a very great service; the ordinary worker is a mighty man of God. It is not so hard for the soldier to do his duty in the midst of the battle, when the eyes of comrades are upon him, and he touches shoulders with his fellows, as on the lonely sentinel beat when nobody sees him and naught but duty inspires. In the quiet, unostentatious service is where so many fail. Every church needs more routine workers; that is, more who can and will go up to the temple on the quiet day after Pentecost is over, which will result in a second Pentecost as it did on this occasion. When Christian people take up the great every-day duties of Christian life with fidelity and earnestness, Pentecost will become a very common experience. Revivals will be the natural order of events.

**III. This incident shows that Peter and John were rich in true wealth, although poor from a worldly standpoint.**

1. The world's standard of wealth is a low one. If a man have not silver and gold, he has nothing worth while in the estimation of many. Such a man gets slight welcome in the social circle, the club, and oftentimes, let it be said with shame, in the church. Silver and gold are the magic keys that unlock many doors in this world. Peter and John could not enter many circles. The "moneyless man" is oftentimes an unwelcome intruder. It is sad to see how some can belittle life by losing sight of the nobler, better things which constitute its true wealth.

2. This incident shows that a man may have something better than silver and gold. Some one may ask, "What can a man have that is better than gold?" To judge from the mad scramble to get it,



nothing could be better. Then, indeed, it were a sad case for mankind, for then only a few, at most, could attain unto the highest good, and the tenure of the coveted blessing is also seen to be most insecure. Riches, we are told, take wings and fly away, and our own observation amply confirms the truth of the statement. Soul-wealth is the only true and enduring riches. Divine love, sympathy, faith, and with these trained and disciplined intellectual powers, constitute the things of highest worth; without these nothing else has value.

Let us not miss these words: "Such as I have, give I unto thee." Peter and John had something the world needed more than silver and gold. Gold will not take the place of soul riches? To have nothing but gold is to be very poor. A man without gold may give more than all others. He may speak the word of love and appreciation for which the heart hungers; he may give the sympathy that meets the deepest craving of the soul; he may, by a masterful, well-trained mind, confer priceless blessing. The greatest gifts that have been made to the world consist not of silver and gold, but of heart treasures.

#### **IV. We have here an example of the most convincing argument.**

1. Consider the position of Peter and John; they went into the temple and healed a lame man. A crowd gathered and Peter preached and charged sin upon them. He spared not; he accused them of murder. The chief priests came upon them and cast them into prison. On the morrow they were brought before Caiaphas and John and Alexander for trial. This would seem to have been a very serious situation. What shall they do? Compromise? With-

hold? Apologize? Sue for mercy? On the contrary, Peter, bold as a lion, preached Jesus at the risk of further imprisonment. A man can better afford to be in prison than to be a coward and violate conscience; in fact, when a man is untrue to duty and self, he thrusts himself into the darkest dungeon.

2. Now note the convincing argument, verse 14: "And seeing the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." We need not fear the persecution if we can produce the healed man. Here is the unanswerable argument of Christianity. This is what the world is looking for. This is what the church, theoretically, proposes to do. This is what the Master taught by word and example. This is where the church fails to-day, and for lack of this the world is being filled with all manner of organizations to do the work that the church ought to be doing. This is getting to be an exceedingly practical world. Institutions can not live on mere sentiment; they can not stand on a past reputation. Ability to satisfy the world's need is the only passport to favor. If the world ever gets the better of the argument, it will be because Christianity surrenders the most convincing syllogism; namely, the healed man. Christian men will hurl powerful arguments, couched in most cogent phrases, in vain, if they do not match the argument in deed. Caiaphas might have answered Peter's argument, but he could not answer Peter's work; so it will ever be.

**V. The true relation of theory and practice is here disclosed.**

1. True theory should never be despised. Some

profess to despise theory on the ground of being practical. Let it not be forgotten that behind every good practice lies a good theory. However, it is true that a theory may be beautiful, but not practical. Some very pleasant theories fail when put to the test. Jesus taught a most beautiful theory; there is nothing so beautiful as the Sermon on the Mount, but it was also wonderfully practical. Had there been a single discrepancy between the theory and the practice, all would have fallen to the ground long ago. The reason why Jesus has lived growingly through the ages, comes about from the fact that his theories, when put to the test, never disappoint the expectation. Theory and practice are married by God, and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Divorce true theory and practice, and all is lost. The agent may display on paper his reaping machine; he may explain it most eloquently, but the farmer says, "Show it at work. I want a practical demonstration." Jesus said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." "Believe me for the very work's sake." Paul said, "I came not with excellency of speech, . . . but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The first commission said, "As ye go, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give." This has a practical application to all Christian people. Doctrine is important, but let all understand that however great the truth for which they contend may be, they must complete the argument by producing the healed man. Otherwise all is lost.

Note what produced the effect: "When they saw the man that was healed, they could say nothing." Against this there is no rising up. The world

will never be brought to Christ by a fine theory divorced from practice. I am in love with the great plea for union of the people of God, for the rejection of all party names and creeds, but I know full well that with this must be combined the healed man, or all will end in failure. The world sees the sick man first, and demands that he shall be healed, and woe to the church that forgets this.

2. Church ordinances rest here. We may plead for the Lord's Supper every first day of the week; do we attend? If not, our argument has little force. We may plead for the baptism of the apostles, but do we give it the place of dignity and sacredness that it occupied under their ministry? We say, preach the gospel in order to save; how much do we give? how much sacrifice do we make to send it to the ends of the earth? Do we, most of all, preach it in action?

I fear it is Satan's plan to reduce all to theory. No doubt he is perfectly willing to have us make Christianity a mere matter of argument. He wants us to spend our time in talk and discussion. Produce the healed man; this answers infidelity; this answers the hostile critic. Build schools, asylums; heal the sick, cast out devils; this is the work of Christianity. It must show the healed man or perish.

3. This divorces the fate of the cause from that of the advocate. Peter preached in the morning; he was in prison at night. So it may be with us, but if we have a healed man to show, our work will stand, and if so, nothing else matters. Even the prison-house of death may hold us, but the work will live; the cause will go forward. They could shut up Peter, but they could not shut up Peter's work.

When Christianity rests the case in the healed man the argument will have been won.

It is great to do great things, but it is greater to do little things with fidelity, or at least the things the world calls small. It is well to have an orthodox faith, but it is greater to have an orthodox life. The orthodoxy of action must accompany the orthodoxy of faith. And let us remember that the thing the world needs most, every one can give. All can not make the great speech, but all can perform the noble deed.

VI. In the study of this second case of conversion recorded in the Book of Acts, we readily see that it agrees with the conversion of the three thousand, in all essential particulars.

1. The attention of the people was arrested by a miracle, as was the case on Pentecost. Miracle was uniformly employed by the apostles as they went out under the great commission. They were divinely given credentials used in substantiating their superhuman message; this was necessary in the beginning, because extraordinary claims demand extraordinary justification. However, when such claims have been once established by supernatural proof, miracles are no longer necessary, consequently we have no account of miracles being employed except by the apostles, or those to whom the power was given by imposition of the hands of the apostles. It must ever be kept in mind that the mission of miracles in the establishment of the church was special and extraordinary, and constituted no part of the process of conversion, and that they were consequently discontinued as soon as the purpose for which they had been given was accomplished.

2. We also see that the facts of the gospel were set forth by the apostle Peter, as in the sermon on Pentecost; he preached the death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus, and the remission of sins in his name. He also made reference to prophecy in substantiation of his message, as he did in his first sermon on Pentecost. This seems to have been the apostolic method of preaching. They made much use of prophecy. They showed that Jesus, in his life, death, resurrection and glorification, fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is a pity that in our modern preaching so little use is found for the weapon that was so powerful in apostolic hands.

3. We also see that the commands enjoined in this second sermon were the same as the commands given on Pentecost. The record does not state that the people cried out and asked what to do, as they did on Pentecost; but whether they did or did not, the command to repent came after the sermon. The preacher evidently saw that at least some of the people believed his message, and he commanded them to repent, which is always the first thing to be done after faith is produced. On Pentecost, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins;" here he said, "Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may be given seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." When we consider that baptism is the first outward act of the sinner, following faith and repentance, we can not doubt that the turning here commanded consisted of, or involved, baptism, and was in order to the remission of sins, just as it was on Pentecost; hence in this case, as in the former, faith, repentance and baptism were the or-



derly steps involved in the conversion. On Pentecost Peter followed the command to be baptized with the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here he uses the phrase, "so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," doubtless pointing to the blessing conferred through the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to the obedient, penitent believer.

4. It should be carefully noted that in this case, as well as in the conversion of the three thousand, faith was produced by preaching, and not by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man. This agrees with the Scripture teaching on the subject. Paul declares, "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a preacher?"

5. As to how many were converted on this occasion, or as to how long it was after Pentecost, we do not know. The record informs us that after the wonderful events of Pentecost, the disciples sold their possessions and parted them among themselves, as each had need, and that they continued day by day in the temple, and breaking bread at home they took their food with gladness, and it says further, "The Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." How long this continued before the temple experience of Peter and John is not stated, but we may safely assume that a number of days or weeks elapsed; nor do we know just how many were converted on this occasion. Some say five thousand, some, two thousand, but it would seem most natural to conclude that beginning with the three thousand on Pentecost, the number of the disciples grew day by day, and that when the con-



versions of this occasion were added to them, the number reached about five thousand men; as to whether women were included in this account we do not know; the record says, "five thousand men." This may be a generic use of the term; certainly there could be no reason for excluding women from the count. The conversion of women is mentioned in other places; in fact, to women is given a most honorable place in the early history of the church.

Thus it will be seen that in the facts preached, the commands given, and the promises made, there is substantial agreement in the two sermons of Peter that we have examined. We also see that there is perfect accord with the steps involved in conversion; namely, faith to change the heart, repentance to change the life purpose, and baptism to change the state, or relationship to God.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Conversion of the Samaritans.

TEXT.—Acts 8:5-24: And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitude gave heed with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the things which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits they came out, crying with a loud voice; and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city.

But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who before-time in the city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries, but when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip, and beholding the signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.

Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit: For as yet it had fallen upon none of them; only they had been baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money.

Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God.

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee:

For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.

This is a most interesting case, because it deals with the conversion of a people who were not of pure Jewish blood. The Samaritans were a mongrel people descended from the remnant of Jews left in the land at the time of the Babylonian captivity, who intermarried with colonists that had settled in the country after the deportation of their brethren. On the return from the captivity the Samaritans wanted to assist in the rebuilding of the temple, but their offer was indignantly refused, consequently a bitter prejudice grew up between the Jews and Samaritans, and so great did it become that between Jew and Samaritan there was no dealing.

It will be borne in mind that up to this time no Gentiles had been converted; at least, there is no record of such conversion. The disciples, it seemed, remained in Jerusalem, notwithstanding the commission to go into all the world to preach the gospel to the whole creation. This shows the exclusiveness of the early Jewish Christians and their failure to realize the obligation placed upon them by the commission of our Lord. They were finally driven out by the persecution that arose upon the death of

Stephen, and then they went everywhere preaching the Word, and Philip was found in the city of Samaria, preaching to the despised Samaritans. It was sort of half-way house between the Jew and the Gentile, and may be regarded as a preparatory step to the fuller carrying out of the commission.

Three things stand out prominently in this case of conversion:

### **I. The conversion of the Samaritans by the preaching of Philip.**

1. It is worthy of notice that the power to work miracles in the planting of the church was not confined to the apostles. Philip exercised the power among the Samaritans, and he used it for the same purpose for which the apostles used it; namely, to get the attention of the people, and to substantiate his superhuman message. It seems that the apostles could confer this power upon others, but we have no record that it descended to the third person. It was evidently intended simply as a gift to be used in the early church. We notice that the effect of the miracle upon the Samaritans was just the same as the effect produced by the miracles upon Pentecostians, and upon the people in the temple when Peter preached his second sermon. The record says that the multitudes gave heed, with one accord, unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they saw the signs that he did, and that they believed his preaching concerning the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and they were baptized, both men and women.

2. The steps in their conversion must have been the same as in the case of the Jews on Pentecost. Philip had learned his message from the apostle

Peter, and upon him the gift to work miracles had been bestowed. He used this gift in the same way that the apostle used the gift, and doubtless his message was identical with that of the apostle's. The sequel shows that he had given to the Samaritans the command to be baptized, for the record says when they believed Philip's preaching they were baptized. He evidently preached the facts of the gospel; namely, the death of Jesus Christ for their sins; his burial and resurrection, and when they believed his message he commanded them, doubtless, to repent and be baptized. The record is elliptical, mentioning merely that Philip preached, the people believed and were baptized, but we have no difficulty in supplying the omitted links in the chain, when we understand the necessary steps in conversion, the commands of Peter on two previous occasions, and further taking into account the facts that Philip must have gotten his message from the apostles. We may also safely conclude that Philip promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that they received it as did the Jews on Pentecost.

**II. The next prominent feature of this interesting case is the impartation of the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands.**

The account says that when the apostles heard that the Samaritans had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, "who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet it was fallen upon none of them." Does this mean that the Samaritans had not received the gift of the Spirit upon their baptism?

In order to have a clear understanding of this

case, we must keep in mind that there are two distinct endowments of the Holy Spirit spoken of; one is the gift of the Spirit, carrying with it miraculous power which was conferred upon individuals from time to time throughout the Jewish dispensation, and in the early history of the Christian Church. This gift Christ had in all its fullness, and the disciples exercised it during the personal ministry of Christ, and during the planting of the church. It was given for a confirmatory purpose. But there was another spiritual endowment which Christ said would not be given until after he had ascended to heaven, and this, Christ said, would be such a great blessing that it would more than make good for the loss of his personal presence. He declared, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come." Now this gift of the Spirit was not to be special, but to be enjoyed by all the family of believers, for Peter, in his first sermon, said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; for to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." Now, doubtless, it was the miraculous gift of the Spirit that the Samaritans had not received before the coming of Peter and John, because Philip, doubtless, did not have the power to confer it. We have no record of any person other than the apostles conferring this power, and it was doubtless the purpose of God to grant to at least some of these Samaritans the power to work miracles, as he granted it to the early disciples in order that they might

assist in the establishment of the kingdom. They doubtless enjoyed the indwelling presence of the Spirit, immediately upon their baptism, which is not a miracle-working power, but a comforting and sustaining power.

The conveying of the Spirit through the laying on of hands was doubtless exercised by the apostles with discrimination. We are not to assume that every disciple in the apostolic church received this gift. We do not know that all the Samaritan Christians received this gift. That the gift was intended for a special purpose is clear, and it was doubtless conferred upon those who, in the divine wisdom, were suited to exercise it, and were called to do a special work in the establishment of the kingdom of God.

**III. Next comes prominently to view the conversion and apostacy of Simon, the sorcerer.**

1. It is a question of interest as to whether Simon was really converted under the preaching of Philip. The account says, "Simon also himself believed, and being baptized he continued with Philip." There is no intimation that his conversion was not a genuine one. There is no indication that it differed in any way from the conversion of other Samaritans. It would rather seem that the thing happened to Simon that has happened to many another man who starts out well in the Christian life; he apostatized. He allowed his love of money to get the better of him. Having been accustomed to practice sorcery for gain, and seeing, through the laying on of the apostles' hands, miraculous power was conferred, he concluded that he could use this power for his own selfish, pecuniary advantage, and there-



fore proposed to purchase it. This would indicate that all of the Samaritans had not received this power through the laying on of hands. Simon, and doubtless others, had been omitted in the conferring of this gift, and he coveted the power that he saw others exercising.

He made two mistakes: First, in supposing that this gift of God which had been placed in the hands of Peter and John, could be purchased with money. This is not the last time that this mistake has been made. In the days of Martin Luther, those who claimed to be the representatives of God offered to sell divine favors for money, and this really led to the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Simon made his second mistake in supposing that the divine gift may be used for purely personal and selfish ends. God's gift to individuals, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are never for the sake of the individual alone, but rather for the sake of the many, to whom the individual is expected to minister. When a man uses any power that God has given, for his own aggrandizement rather than for the advantage and blessing of his fellow-man, he makes the mistake into which Simon the sorcerer fell.

2. Here we discover the means appointed for the pardon of the Christian man who sins. God has made baptism the condition on which he will pardon the sins of the alien, provided it be preceded by faith and repentance. Peter told Simon to repent and pray in order that the wicked thought of his heart might be forgiven him. Simon, having become a disciple of the Lord Jesus by believing Philip's message and obeying his command, now must receive pardon, not by being baptized again, but

through repentance and prayer, and this is the rule for every Christian man who seeks the forgiveness of God for his sins and shortcomings, and we are told that Jesus Christ sits as a mediator and intercessor between us and God. All this is beautifully clear and simple. The alien sinner who desires to come into the family of God must enter by the means divinely ordained. Thus entering, he enjoys the forgiveness of all past sins. Thenceforward, he has an advocate with God the Father, whom he approaches through repentance and prayer, and thus receives the forgiveness of his sins.

3. The question is sometimes asked, "Is it wrong for the alien sinner to pray for pardon?" I unhesitatingly answer, "No." For the prayer of an earnest soul who recognizes his lost condition is spontaneous; you can not keep men convicted of sin, and persuaded of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, from praying. Cornelius prayed, and his prayer went up as a memorial before God. It is wrong, however, to tell the alien sinner that his sin will be pardoned through prayer, when God has clearly laid down the terms upon which he will receive and pardon him. Do not blame the penitent alien when he prays, but rather blame the would-be religious guide, who fails to give him the plain terms upon which God promises to forgive him. To keep a believing penitent on his knees for weeks and months, as has often been done, instead of declaring to him the plain terms of forgiveness laid down by the apostle, is an awful mistake. May we not say, it is a sin before God because it has driven many a man into skepticism, and, in some cases, into insanity? There is no reason why a man who believes on the Lord

Jesus Christ and repents should remain unpardoned for a single hour.

In conclusion, we may say that, so far as the record goes, there is no indication that the conversion of the Samaritans differed, in any way, from the cases examined in the two previous chapters.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Conversion of the Eunuch.

Read Acts 8:26:40, preparatory to the study.

TEXT.—Acts 8:36-39: "And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

It was the habit of the Oriental people to read aloud and gesticulate, and this fact explains how Philip could know what the eunuch was reading.\* We may, incidentally, get a hint here that may be of value to us. Jewish teachers, we are told, required students to read aloud. There is a proverb that "The words of truth give life to them that utter them forth." I have found that in reading passages aloud, ideas have come to me, not seen before. I am also convinced that reading aloud contributes greatly to memory.

We have in this case a clear example of gospel conversion. Is there a providential element here? How did Philip happen to meet the chariot? They were traveling almost in the same direction. If the chariot had passed a half hour earlier, or if Philip had arrived a half hour later, the meeting would not have occurred. While we believe the age of miracles is now past, yet let us not lose

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\*Parker's Apostolic Life, Vol. I., p. 212.

sight of the superintending providence of God; otherwise there would be no room for prayer.

In bringing Philip and the chariot together there seems to be nothing resembling miracle, yet there was something we may reasonably call divine providence. True, the angel of the Lord sent Philip in a certain direction, and the Spirit directed him to join himself to the chariot, but how easy to miss the chariot without the divine providence concerning which nothing is said.

There are many similar incidents in life. We call them accidents, but who shall say how far the hand of God operates in the apparent accidents of life? I fear many of us are living too far away from God. We are living too much by accident or chance. We fail to recognize God's gracious dealings with us in the every-day routine of life. Would we not be stronger for our work if we felt that God was overseeing and shaping the events of our lives?

**I. It will be profitable to study this Ethiopian nobleman as an inquirer.\***

1. He was a bewildered inquirer, but he seems to have been in the bewilderment of honest inquiry. The usual method of Bible study is calculated to produce this perplexity. But how could it be otherwise here? Reading the Old Testament without the light of the New Testament, is a perplexing business. Christ is the key to all mysteries in the Bible. Give Christ the place in the Book that he ought to occupy, and the character that he claims, and you have gone far toward eliminating difficulty. If Christ himself is a difficulty, you have at least done this much: You have traded a thousand smaller

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\*See Apostolic Life, Vol. I., pp. 212-217.

difficulties for one large one, just as you have traded a thousand mysteries in our world for one great mystery when you accept God.\*

Some men seem to take a pride in their doubts and perplexities. It is sometimes a kind of vanity with men to speak of their difficulties. They seem to say, "My mind is so critical that I can not accept the teaching as others do. I require more evidence; I am bewildered because of my exacting mind. I must have more proof than the average man." This is no less disgusting than foolish.

2. He was, however, a teachable inquirer; he seems to have said, "I wonder what that means?" A most beautiful trait is this; one of the first characteristics of honesty. To be stubborn, dogmatical, conceited, is to deprive oneself of the gift of knowledge. To be teachable is a lovely thing. How few are teachable; many go to the Bible to find proof of what they already believe. Such persons can always find what they are looking for. The humble, teachable mind is a thing to be coveted. The mind that can empty itself and say when it approaches the Bible, "I will accept what this book says, and not try to twist it to suit my preconceived opinions," is the mind that is in a condition to discover great truths.

3. He was not a traditionalist. In this he differed from the Jews as a class. The Jews believed what was handed down to them. There is much of this to-day. Do not dignify this with the term "faith." Such persons are not students. If it were not for this tendency, many doctrines would not live

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\*Parker's People's Bible, Vol. on Genesis, chapter on "God the Explanation of All Things."

an hour. It is surprising how many Christian people believe and practice what has been handed to them without thought or investigation on their own part. It is well to reverence the past. It is folly to imagine that doctrines should be discarded simply because they are old. This is equivalent to saying that there is nothing fixed; that all beliefs should be held subject to change or revision. Perish the thought. It is equally foolish to blindly accept whatever is transmitted to us simply because it is hoary with age. There is hoary falsehood as well as hoary truth. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," is a wise maxim.

4. He was furthermore an obedient inquirer. He did not hesitate. He did not stop to say, "I am not fit." He did not pause to count the cost. This keeps back many to-day. They can't pay the price. The man who hears, believes, and still hesitates, trifles with self, God and man. This man said, "What hinders?" Nothing. Sometimes the church gets up hindrances. Woe to the church that does so. Sometimes sinners are told they can do nothing. That they must wait until God gets ready to save them. This is a slander on God. The gospel has only words of welcome. It says, "Come;" "Now is the accepted time;" "To-day is the day of salvation." If there are any hindrances in the way, rest assured they are man-made. Let every one know that when he is ready, there is absolutely no hindrance on God's side. Sometimes sinners themselves create the hindrances. They trifle with conscience and with God, because of many imaginary obstacles. This is all supreme folly. There is nothing that should hinder a conscientious, convinced man for a moment.



## II. Let us next look at this man in the light of a hearer.

1. He was a prepared hearer; he had been carefully perusing God's Word. In this he differed from many, in and out of the church. You can not get the average Christian to study God's Word at home or at church. How different is the preacher's work in this day; he has to coax men to hear, persuade them to listen. The average hearer comes merely for entertainment, or to comply with custom. As a consequence, the sermon must be squeezed into the smallest limit. A good teacher in astronomy, mathematics or history insists on having at least one hour to teach his lesson. When men come fresh from the daily paper or from the sensational novel, what can you expect? They are angry when they come, and every moment you detain them, makes them more so. I am not going to lay all the blame on the pew; often the pulpit has been made the place for dry essays on theology. This is a miserable farce; the men who get the audiences and hold them, are the men who feed the people. The other extreme is, a little poetry, a little sentiment, a few anecdotes; anything, in fact, that does not demand thought. This is the modern substitute, in many cases, for the gospel message. The church can very soon correct this. Stand firm against such demands. Ask for bread and be satisfied with nothing else. And let those who know bread when they see it decide this question. God speed the day when the pulpit shall not be prostituted to small ends, when it shall not be made a mere lecture platform whose chief end is entertainment; but rather when it shall be a place where the Bread of Life is dispensed to the famish-

ing multitudes. I firmly believe that the man who will feed the people with the bread that comes down from heaven, will always have plenty of people to feed. Those who entertain men may shine for an hour as a passing meteor, but those who feed men will shine like the fixed stars in the firmament.

2. He was a responsive hearer; he not only received, but gave back, which is a condition of growth. Doubtless his manner and attitude was responsive. The sequel shows he was responsive to the instruction. To hear well is a divine accomplishment. When this is lacking, all ends in failure. Grandest thoughts and noblest utterances are wasted on an indifferent hearer. If you do not intend to listen, do not go to church. The house of God is not the place to entertain company or to be entertained by company. Do not refuse attention or demand amusement; do not disgrace yourself and those to whom you are bound by ties of friendship or blood by showing that your mind is so illy disciplined that you can not control it, or your heart so perverted that you no longer possess the feelings of a true man or woman. If there is one thing that Christian people should rise up and demand, it is that those who attend the house of God shall treat it respectfully, and they should see to it that their own children are not flagrant transgressors in this regard.

3. He became a converted hearer. Do not always blame the preacher if men are not converted. The material on which the preacher has to work has much to do with results. We forget this. While salvation is theoretically and even potentially within the reach of all, yet many a man has so impaired

his intellectual and moral nature that he has made it very hard for the gospel message to reach him. Intellectual habits have been formed and fixed that well-nigh shut him out from the highest fields of truth. When he is converted it is more the result of a passing emotion than of true enlightenment and conviction. It was not so here. This man was an enlightened and convinced convert. This is not always the case. Some act from impulse, some from policy or expediency. Notice, too, in this connection, the enlightened convert is an exultant convert, a rejoicing convert, a useful convert. God can use such a man for high ends.

**III. Let us now study the elements that enter into a Bible conversion.**

1. Preaching seems to have been the first thing necessary; Philip preached. How this drops into the sacred harmony: "Go, preach the gospel." "God hath chosen that the Gentiles should hear the words of the gospel and believe." "Faith comes by hearing." Modern theology is woefully at fault here. It teaches that conversion is the direct act of the Holy Spirit. True, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as having done certain things which we should keep in mind: (1) It qualified the apostles, guided them into all truth. (2) It convicted the world of sin in rejecting Christ. (3) It established Christ's righteousness. (4) It condemned Satan. (5) It was given as comforter to the obedient believer. (6) It acted on the sinner, as in this case, through the Word preached, and as it always does. Faith comes by hearing. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. This is the Spirit's method of reaching the sinner. Those who claim that the Holy Spirit acts directly on the heart of the

sinner to convert him, are guilty of a strange inconsistency when they preach to men. Oftentimes the practice of men is better than their theory, as in this case.

2. The man heard the gospel and believed it. Here is the great work of the preacher now. To preach with such earnestness and simplicity that men will believe, is a gift to be coveted. To pray God to send converting power is misleading. It creates the impression that God is indifferent. It implies that the power is not here, and leads to the conclusion that the power acts independently. All this is wrong. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Let us pray for power to so preach it that it will have its proper effect.

3. The believing man obeyed the gospel. How did he know anything about baptism? Evidently Philip preached it. Why did Philip preach baptism? Because his commission required it. The gospel consists not only of facts to be believed, but of commands to be obeyed. Those who leave out some of the commands of the gospel are assuming a fearful responsibility. In closing up the revelation, the writer says, "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Let it not be said this means from the Book of Revelation only. Is the Word of God more sacred in the last Book of the Bible than elsewhere?

This case of conversion harmonizes with every example of New Testament conversion. The act of baptism is always the consummating step. It brings

us, if prepared by faith and repentance, into the family. We are baptized into Christ.

Says one, "I believe a man is converted before baptism." What do you mean by conversion? Change of heart? Then it is true, but this is only a part of the process. The full process requires change of state, and this requires baptism; therefore, a completely converted man is a baptized man.

**IV. Let us notice a few very important lessons which this case of conversion teaches.**

1. It shows how much knowledge is needed in order to become a Christian. A man in the apostolic day could learn enough in one sermon to become a member of the church of Christ. In a conversation while riding in a chariot, the necessary knowledge could be acquired.

2. It shows how soon baptism may be administered. A person could believe, repent, and be baptized, the same hour. There is no case under the apostolic ministry where baptism was deferred. Is not much of modern practice at fault here?

3. It shows how baptism is properly administered. If the Bible writer had had the modern practice of affusion in view, he could not have condemned it in a clearer way than in the account given here. "They came to the water;" "They went down into the water;" "Both Philip and the eunuch;" "They came up out of the water." Strange procedure, if the water was put upon the candidate by sprinkling or pouring.

4. It shows how sudden a conversion may be. It takes just long enough to hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it.

5. It shows the position given to joy. It comes

after obedience, not before it. Here is the logical place for joy. Let us rejoice because we know we are Christians, and not rather offer some ecstatic feeling as the evidence of the fact. There is no such joy as this. Consciousness of duty done and sins forgiven is the greatest cause for joy.

Look into the chariot! What do you behold? Is it the same man? No, it is a new man we see now. His bewilderment is gone. He rejoices in God. There is nothing so grand as this; a new man with new motives, purposes and desires, is the grandest being under heaven because he has his face set toward the highest destiny.

## CHAPTER IX.

### **The Conversion of Saul.\***

Read Acts 9:1-22 to get the whole incident before the mind.

TEXT.—Acts 9:17, 18: "And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, said; Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales; and he received his sight, and he arose, and was baptized." Acts 22:16: "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is Paul's account of the circumstance.

1. Saul, no doubt, thought he had a special mission to exterminate heresy. In this he was like many others both before and since his day. He was willing to act as judge and jury, and in this, too, he is not without company. The prison, rack and stake were the instruments of conversion in which he had most faith. He thought that ideas could be burned or beaten into men. So, many have thought, and have acted accordingly; nor has our twentieth century outgrown these ideas. The vulgar instruments of the rack and stake have been displaced by more refined methods of cruelty, especially in recent times, but the compulsion has been no less complete and effectual. When the workman has been compelled to vote for the candidates and policies of his employer, or face starvation for himself and family

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\* See Parker's Apostolic Life on Acts 9.



through loss of employment, it is merely a new application of the same old doctrine—conversion by force. When those who endow institutions of learning compel professors to teach economic doctrines, with which they have no sympathy, or lose their positions, it is simply a modern way of applying the old hateful principle of conversion by compulsion. It is all antichristian, and deserves the condemnation of every right-minded man.

2. We have in this Scripture an account of how Saul was converted, and, if we are to accept his own estimate of himself, how one of the worst of men was converted. It is interesting to compare this conversion with that of Cornelius, who was one of the best of men. Saul, before his conversion to Christianity, was doubtless a moral man. He was a strict adherent of a religion that taught a very high and exacting morality. He said that prior to his conversion he lived in all good conscience; yet after his conversion, in measuring his former self with the standards of Christianity, he called himself the chief of sinners. Some things that he had formerly done under the sanction of conscience, he looked upon as heinous sins.

I. I desire first to study this case, as it is often presented, as a sudden conversion.

1. There are two views regarding this matter. Some do not believe in sudden conversions, and some think every conversion is sudden. The account given throws light on the subject: "As he journeyed it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus, and suddenly there shone around about him a light out of heaven; and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

There is something very sudden in this case, without doubt. Faith and change of heart were suddenly brought about. I think it is true, as a matter of fact, that some persons are suddenly converted and some are not. Let us be very careful to see why this is so and gather the lesson.

2. An analysis of conversion will enable us to keep what is possible in our minds. Conversion is not simply an exercise of divine power; if so, it might be slow or sudden, depending wholly upon the action of God. But the sinner is not passive in conversion, but active; he co-operates with God.

(1) There is first belief to be created, or the development of faith. This results from evidence or teaching. "Faith comes by hearing." This change of belief may exist where other elements of conversion are lacking. Hundreds have their belief changed who are never converted. Persons who halt at this point arrest the process of conversion; it may be temporarily, or it may be permanently. Any minister of the gospel can recall many cases of this kind that have fallen under his own observation. In truth, such people abound in every community, which is a fact to be deplored. No man can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and stop at that point, without doing himself an irreparable injury. There is no surer way to assassinate the moral faculty than to refuse to act on conviction. Furthermore, faith, to which the proper expression is not given, will eventually die.

(2) There must also be change of purpose. This does not always follow from change of belief, and hence not every one who believes is converted. Faith is, in a measure, independent of will. Mere mental

assent, and this is an element of Christian faith, often can not be withheld. The testimony may be so strong as to compel belief, but when it comes to repentance, the case is different. Change of life, purpose, as respects sin, is entirely under the control of the will of the individual, and this makes delay possible. That there is an element of faith involving the affections, that is under the control of the will, is also true. This explains why some who intellectually believe are never converted, or if at all, why the process is slow. Men will not be converted.

(3) Then there must be change of state or relation. This, too, is under the control of the human will. God can not change the state or relation of the individual without his consent; he must comply with the terms prescribed. Here, then, is another chance for delay.

These three changes are involved in every true conversion. Each of these changes accomplishes a certain result. Change of belief, or faith, purifies the heart. Change of purpose, or repentance, changes the life. Baptism changes the state.

Now can all this be accomplished suddenly? I answer both Yes and No! Time enough has to be given to state the proposition to be believed; that is, to preach the gospel. Then, in some cases, the conversion will be sudden, and in others slow. Some weigh and decide quickly; others reach conclusions very slowly. When belief is changed, the remainder ought to be very rapid, but it is not always the case. Some act from principle or conviction, others from policy or expediency. It takes some people months, some but a brief time. With people of a certain

mental temper and disposition, an hour is sufficient for the accomplishment of the whole process.

3. Let us consider Saul's case and we will better understand it.

A slow conversion was impossible in this instance. Herein we see the harmony in the gospel record. He could never trifle with conviction. To believe, with him, was to act. Saul already believed some things. He knew Jesus had died and was buried. He simply needed faith in the resurrection. Suddenly Jesus appeared to him and he believed. He was of such disposition and make-up that he suddenly changed his purpose, and this was followed by obedience, as soon as the proper person was found to administer baptism. That some days intervened, is true, which, in the divine wisdom, was doubtless necessary in this individual case. The preacher went to complete the process of Saul's conversion when God sent him. In other cases of conversion recorded the baptism followed change of purpose immediately.

II. I desire next to study this instance, as it is sometimes presented, as a case of miraculous conversion, and also as manifesting the power of the gospel.

1. In every conversion there are general and special characteristics. In some respects, every conversion is a model of every other; in other respects, it is unlike any other. Some wish to be converted like Saul. All will, in general aspects, but not in special. How was Paul's mind changed? How was his faith produced? By evidence. So must every one's mind be changed. This change of mind led him to change his purpose, and this led to changed relation. The purpose and relation of every con-

verted man must be changed in the same way. There was a special element here which was miraculous. Evidence was miraculously given, but this was special and peculiar, as the purpose will show. Jesus said to Saul: "I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." In other words, Christ appeared to Saul to make him an apostle. He must needs be a witness of the resurrection to be an apostle; hence Jesus appears to him that he might be able to say, "I saw Christ after he rose from the dead." The conclusion is inevitable that the miraculous part was peculiar. It did not even assure Saul of pardon. This was bestowed in obedience to the command of Ananias. A study of the New Testament conversions shows that the miraculous in every case was special. The general aspects are the same in all. I think our treatment of the conversions clearly brings this out. If people would study conversion as a psychological process, rather than under the bias of a preconceived theory, grievous mistakes would be avoided. It is strange that it is only in religious conversion that people go astray. In other forms of conversion, no mistake is made. For example, the national allegiance of an individual is changed by faith produced by testimony, by repentance or change of mind respecting the government under which the individual has lived and purposes to live, and by a compliance with the terms imposed for changing political

relations. This is all very simple. It is equally clear and simple in the religious domain, when properly viewed. If too much stress seems to be placed upon this question in this discussion, it is because a beautifully simple, logical and psychological process has been so mystified by popular teaching that utterly false notions concerning it have come to prevail.

After Saul had been convinced, by the miraculous appearing of Jesus and his testimony concerning himself, he changed his mind respecting the life he had been leading, as is evident from the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The next step was his baptism in obedience to the command of Ananias, thus making his conversion conform to the normal and necessary process.

2. We have here a striking example of the power of the gospel. Consider Saul's character. Who is he? A Jew of ancient pedigree, a Pharisee, a student and a scholar. There lay within him power to do almost any great work that any man ever did; he could have led armies or ruled empires. He was a great orator, a profound scholar, and an acute thinker. He possessed a high order of genius. There is a great difference in the quality of men. To convert Saul was to convert a host. This gives us a striking illustration of the mighty moral force in the gospel. A system that can take hold of men in all conditions, ranging from the lowest condition of ignorance and degradation to the highest point of intellectual and moral advancement, can not have originated with man. The universality of the religion of Christ is a strong argument for its divinity. No human system shows such adaptability.

Human religions are, always and everywhere, race or class religions.

Incidentally a great lesson may be learned by the sending of Saul to Ananias. When Jesus appeared to Saul, why did he not command him to be baptized? There must have been a reason. Is it not found in the fact that Jesus had given the commission to men to preach the gospel, and that consequently he will not relieve them from the obligation even in a single case? He will appear to Paul to make him a witness of his resurrection, but he will not do that which he has commissioned man to do, and which man is competent to perform.

III. This case also shows us an example of the true fruits of conversion.

1. The meaning of the word "convert"—"to turn about"—indicates the true idea, and shows us how we may be able to test true conversion. If a man's face is set in the same direction after conversion as it was before, the man is not converted. Some say God alone can tell who are converted. This is a great mistake. In most cases, everybody can tell. The converted man is going in the opposite direction from that in which he was traveling before conversion. He is a turned-around man. Paul was a turned man.

2. Notice that Saul started out to persecute, but soon he is found praying.\* We read, "And Saul yet breathing out slaughter;" anon we read, "Behold, he prayeth"—wonderful transformation. Paul had always been a praying man, in one sense, yet, in another, he had never prayed. Prayer is an agency which the Christian alone can use effectively. Christ

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\*Apostolic Life, Vol. I., pp. 236, 237.



is our Mediator. This is no uncommon sight. We have all seen persons pass from fierceness to gentleness, from drunkenness to sobriety, from wickedness to righteousness. This is what Christianity undertakes to do. It turns men around, just as Saul was turned from persecution to gentleness.

3. Also notice when Saul was a Pharisee, he persecuted; when he became a Christian he sought to change men by persuading and proving; in short, by argument. Before conversion he sought to exterminate heresy by violence. We might conclude that after conversion he would persecute the other side. Notice, however, the change; standing before the opposers, he reasons mightily and contends, proving that Jesus is the Christ. This is as it should be. All the persecuting spirit is gone. Why did he not try this method with the Christians before? Simply because he was not converted. Entreaty and supplication are the Christian's sword and dagger. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

### Some Conclusions.

1. It must be evident that Saul's conversion was like all the others we have examined in its general features. Paul believed, repented and was baptized, and thereby his heart, life and state were changed. This has been made clear above, but to repeat it may not be amiss, since the conversion of Saul has been used by the advocates of miraculous conversion as an example of their contention.

2. We see from this case that Christianity is a moral plea. Hence to persecute is to be disloyal to Christ. Christianity addresses the reason, judgment. You can not make men good by force of arms.

3. Paul went a long journey from Jerusalem to Damascus. The moral journey was longer—from persecuting to praying. Here is the perpetual miracle of Christianity. It has been witnessed in every age.

4. Here the contrast between strength and weakness is seen. Saul, at first, is strong, boastful, proud; next, he is led by the hand like a child. Saul's strength was but weakness when he measured swords with God. Woe unto the strength that is purely human. When Saul was prostrate his condition was more hopeful, for out of such weakness may come a greater strength. Paul really was never so strong as when led by the hand, because now his strength was in God. When will men learn that he only is strong whose strength is multiplied by the power of God?

5. Here is an example of how a truly honest, conscientious man will act. Paul was no temporizer. He never counted the cost when duty was involved. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" no disposition to wait and consider. He says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Evidently Jesus knew his man when he picked his last apostle.

6. Paul was an educated man. Is there any lesson in this fact? May we not learn that Christianity needs trained minds for leadership? When Jesus was here on earth he spent his time very largely in the training or educating of men for his work. He gave the commission to men educated under his own teaching. After he left the earth, and could no longer give his personal attention to the training of men, he picked a trained mind for the additional apostle needed.

What can be done to lead the impenitent to Christ? Miracle-working power is not needed, for it could not be lawfully used to turn men to a Christian life. God has infinite power, but he will not use it to turn man against his will. He invites, entreats, and then patiently stands and waits for him to deliberately choose to come.

What dignity this places upon human nature. Man is too great a being to stay away from Christ. His possibilities are too great for him to jeopardize his chances. Why should any one delay a single hour? "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

## CHAPTER X.

### **The Conversion of Cornelius.**

Read Acts 10:25-48 as a preparation.

Acts 10:34-35: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

1. Jesus, before leaving the world, said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This commission is in harmony with the whole revelation of God. Prophecy pointed to it. Several years have transpired since the commission was given, and yet no Gentile has been saved; at least, we have no record of any Gentile converts up to this time. This fact is significant. It shows the failure of the apostles of our Lord to understand the scope of the commission given to them. This would seem to have been an impossibility, but it only shows how hard it is for persons to grasp a great truth when it runs counter to their education and prejudices; the holding of American slaves is a case in point. The Declaration of Independence said, "We hold it to be self-evident that God has created all men free and equal." Notwithstanding this statement, the American people tolerated slavery for almost a century after it was uttered, and it cost a million men and a billion dollars to give practical expression to it; such is the blindness of prejudice, especially when fortified by self-interest.

2. This chapter gives the account of the first

Gentile convert, one of the greatest events of history. We must keep this fact in mind in studying this chapter; otherwise all is obscure. "God made of one blood all nations that dwell on the face of the earth." This has been a hard lesson for men to learn. The doctrines of aristocracy, race, class, caste, have become so deeply rooted in the minds of men that they seem almost to defy the power of God to uproot them.

This incident, in view of all the circumstances, deserves to rank as one of the epoch-making events of the world. In the conversion of Cornelius we are facing one of the most interesting and instructive events recorded in the New Testament. It is the key-note in the gospel harmony. It is the interpretative incident of the scope of the divine purpose. It sounds the death-knell of race and class exclusiveness. This must be kept in mind to understand all the elements of this conversion.

**I. I am reminded by this chapter that the Bible is a wonderfully dramatic book.\***

Four chapters stand out prominently in this regard.

1. The first chapter of Genesis is one. See what movement and excitement: worlds are made, vegetable and animal life are created. What expectancy is awakened; something is going to happen to justify the marvelous activity. In four words the secret comes out: "Let us make man"—now all is clear. This is the fitting climax to it all.

2. The first chapter of Matthew is the second. The same thing is repeated. There is movement,

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\* See Parker's *Apostolic Life* on this chapter, to which I am indebted for some of the thoughts of the sermon.

excitement, urgency. Here is the explanatory clause: "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." It is impossible to stop one verse sooner in either chapter without missing the meaning. In the first instance, when man stands up we say, "That explains all the preparation." So here, One is called Emmanuel, Saviour; that meets the expectation aroused; heaven and earth are united; Divinity is married to humanity in the incarnation of God; the divine plan is at last complete.

3. The second chapter of Acts is the third case. Here we have the same movement and excitement: Fire, tongues, wonderful speech arrest the attention. All is confusion until we read, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is impossible to stop one whit sooner without leaving a conscious hiatus. We would feel that the speech had been broken off before its natural conclusion had been reached. When Divinity marries itself to humanity in the gift of the Holy Spirit, a conclusion is reached that fits the situation. There is this difference between the spiritual endowment of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit promised by Peter. Jesus, being divine in nature, received the Holy Spirit without measure, that is, in an unlimited degree; we, being human, receive the Spirit by measure, doubtless according to our ability.

4. The tenth chapter of Acts is worthy to stand in this succession. Again, there is the same movement, the same wonderful manifestations. Something extraordinary is going to happen. Here is the

explanation: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." This explains all. This broadside from heaven's batteries sweeps away the doctrine of unconditional election. Now, for the first time, the barriers are broken down. The world waited long for this. We might know what was coming by the teaching of Christ: "What shall it profit if a man should gain the whole world and lose his life?" The old version says "soul," and the context shows that this more nearly expresses the thought. The human soul is the unit of value, and that, too, apart from any adventitious or ennobling circumstances. It is remarkable that this utterance of Peter was put into the mouth of one who belonged to the most exclusive race of the time. If this had come from a Roman it would have been far less surprising; it took a miracle, or rather a series of miracles, to bring it forth from a Jew.

**II. Let us now consider the preparation leading up to the event.**

1. In life there is much preparation that leads to great events, and yet we are unconscious of it. No occasion ends with itself. There are no isolated events in life. To-morrow we reap the fruit of to-day's sowing, and yet we know not that we are sowing. Your going to church on some occasion may be your salvation. A chance acquaintance may determine your future. The book you read may change your life. The conversation with a friend may alter your destiny. These facts almost make us afraid to live. They certainly should admonish us to live our best. Truly, "Life is real, life is earnest."



2. See how marvelously Simon Peter was prepared. The last verse of ninth chapter reads: "And it came to pass he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner." Peter's being sent to the tanner was not accidental. There was wonderful meaning in this. God takes us on little by little; first, Peter must lodge with the tanner. This was a despised calling in the minds of the Jews. The tanner was almost an outcast. He could not live in town, but must reside outside. God seems to be educating Peter by a gradual process. He is taking him one step at a time. One prejudice at a time is being removed. It is a long road from the house of the Jew to the house of the Gentile; the house of the tanner was a sort of half-way place. God will now take Peter another step; hence the vision showing Peter not to call anything common or unclean that God had cleansed.

This is a human experience. In youth we do not want to die, but disappointments and hardships come; we are led a step at a time until finally we say, "I have a desire to depart and be at rest." If all we have to endure in life were revealed to us at once, doubtless we would give up in despair, but little by little the trials come and the endurance of each hardship nerves and strengthens us to meet successfully the next.

3. Cornelius must also be prepared. An angel appeared and told him to send for Peter. Cornelius' vision served also to strengthen Peter. All this leads step by step to something more than ordinary. Here it is: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Peter, the Jew, is probably the last man to whom Cornelius would have applied for in-

struction. Even if his own feelings had permitted it, the known prejudice of the Jewish race would have prevented it. When God works a miracle there is always sufficient cause for it.

4. One more miracle was needed. While Peter yet spake the Holy Spirit came. Each had been prepared by a miracle. Now a miracle is wrought to convince the witnesses. Peter is performing an act for which he would be called to account. Jewish prejudice would not allow him to go into the house of a Gentile without protest, hence the necessity of witnesses, and of evidence by which they would be able to vindicate him. The witnesses having received indubitable testimony of the acceptance of the Gentiles with God, and Peter himself being fully convinced, he is now ready to administer baptism, yet he appeals to his brethren present to justify him: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, seeing they have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

### **III. Now let us study the conversion and its attendant manifestations.**

1. Be it observed that this is the conversion of a moral man, hence moral life alone is not sufficient. Cornelius was a man of very high moral character; he was benevolent, just, prayerful. Still he had to send for Simon Peter and hear words whereby he might be saved; he was moral and yet unsaved; a just man, and yet in a lost condition. How woeefully this matter is misunderstood. Some refuse to believe that this can be true, and insist that morality alone is sufficient.

2. The mistake grows out of a misconception of salvation. Salvation can not be merited. It is

not earned by something we do; it is not of works, but of grace. No man is free from sin, and man has nothing wherewith to purchase God's favor. Salvation involves pardon, and pardon is the gift of God, and this is obtained on God's terms. Hence to be saved a man must accept it as a matter of grace, and on God's plainly expressed conditions.\*

3. It is evident that the miraculous circumstances grew out of the special peculiarities. Cornelius was the first Gentile convert. All things begin in miracle. There are special reasons here. Prejudice must be overcome and witnesses prepared. This explains the angel's visit to Cornelius, the sheet let down, the outpouring of the Spirit; three miracles for three distinct purposes, as was shown above. It is very necessary to get a correct understanding of the work accomplished by the miraculous element in the conversions recorded lest the conclusion be reached that miracle is a factor in all conversions. This would be a serious mistake, but, unfortunately, one that we have not escaped, much to the confusion and mystification of the whole subject. That our conclusions are right in this matter is shown by the fact that when Peter returned to Jerusalem he was taken to task for going in and eating with uncircumcised people, and he cited the miracles in vindication of his course. If men were willing to accept the Bible's own explanation of its miracles, much difficulty would be avoided.

4. We must not confound the outpouring of the Spirit with the gift of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit at the household of Cornelius served spe-

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\*For a fuller discussion see subsequent chapter on "The Great Invitation."

cial purposes, as we have shown. It did not give evidence of pardon. The gift of the Spirit is a promise to be enjoyed by all Christians. Here, as on Pentecost, the miraculous gift or manifestations of the Spirit, and the abiding gift promised to Christians, were seen in conjunction for special reasons, but we should be careful not to confound them. The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit passed away when they had accomplished their purpose in the introduction and establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The abiding gift will continue until the end of time. We often hear people pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It were better to urge men to obey the commands of the gospel and promise the gift of the Spirit, which is the climax of divine grace.

5. Eliminating the special and peculiar, we find that Cornelius' conversion was like all others; he heard the gospel, believed the gospel, repented, was baptized. It required the same to save an ignorant Roman, or a prejudiced Jew, as was required in this case, and no more. Human nature is the same everywhere. It requires the same to-day as it required in the apostolic day to save a man from sin. We all need to learn the great lesson that Peter learned.

How glib we talk about men being nothings, nobodies, not worth saving. God had to teach Peter the great lesson of the value of a man. He said, "God hath showed me not to call any man common or unclean." God would have us see a man in the creature, in every human being. We can not see very deep; very superficial circumstances obscure our vision, but there is something deeper that God sees that is of great value. When Christ went to eat

with Zaccheus, men said, "He eateth with sinners;" but Christ saw something of highest worth in the despised publican. Oh for the power to look deep beneath the surface and see in every man potentially a child of God.

You, who are not Christians, show the sincerity Cornelius showed: "Now, therefore, we are all here present to hear all things commanded thee of God." He was also swift to obey when his duty was made clear. Will you not hear and obey Christ, and thus place yourself in the line of truest development and highest destiny?

## CHAPTER XI.

### **The Conversion of Lydia.\***

Reading, Acts 16:6-15.

TEXT.—Acts 16:14, 15: “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

1. Paul was a Spirit-led man. He never set up his judgment against the Divine will. When Jesus first appeared to him he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and the spirit of obedience never forsook him. In verse 7 we learn that he had planned to go into Bithynia, but when the Spirit directed otherwise, he was perfectly obedient.

We notice, also, that Paul was very prompt in his obedience. At the time of his conversion this disposition manifested itself. He says, in speaking of his call, “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” When directed by the vision to go into Macedonia, he says, “Immediately we endeavored to go.” No temporizing, no hesitancy, but obedience prompt and cheerful. God bless the man who is true to his God, true to his fellowman, true to himself. Such a man never puts off a duty. Such a man never counts the cost when duty is involved.

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\* See Parker's *Apostolic Life*, Vol. II., pp. 142-148, for some of the suggestions elaborated in this chapter.

2. This is the characteristic Christian spirit. Salvation consists in sinking the human will in the divine will. If you can not do this you are not saved. The will of God is the fountain of all order and blessedness. The trouble in the church to-day is that we are substituting our wills for God's will. Why is not every seat in the church filled on the Lord's Day? The answer is, many are substituting their own wills for God's will. They are doing what they want to do rather than what God wants them to do. This is the reason why multitudes remain out of the church; they are unwilling to subordinate their will to the divine will. Not until people are willing to surrender to God and make his will supreme are they prepared to become citizens of the kingdom. "Thy people offer themselves willingly, in the day of thy power," the Psalmist declared, and people who do not offer themselves willingly for service, God can not use.

### **I. The peculiar social quality of Christian worship is revealed.**

1. The characteristic impulse of Christianity is to go forth. "On the sabbath day we went forth." If you can take your Christianity with you into a little room and lock the door and stay there comfortably, you need to examine it carefully, I am afraid you have not got the genuine article; I fear you have been imposed upon. If you can sit down in your own home with your wife and children when the Lord's Day comes, and feel comfortable and complacent, you have cause for alarm about the genuineness of your religion. True Christianity refuses to be shut up in one house. It has a social instinct that is never satisfied. No sooner does it



occupy one field than it demands a larger one; put it into a heart and it demands the neighborhood. Put it into a town and it demands the State. Put it into a State and it demands the nation. Put it into the nation and it demands the world. If you do not feel this way, your Christianity is a sham.

2. The words "home" and "family" are greater words than you imagine. The Christian home is a larger place than the little house you occupy. The Christian family is a larger company than any that dwells beneath one little roof. If you know the Christian meaning of "home" and "family" you will go forth like Paul when the Lord's Day comes. You will say, "I must find the place where the family meets; I must sit at the family table to-day where my brothers and sisters are." Do you say you can sit down in your own little room and read your Bible, partake of your feast? No, no, my brother; your word "home" is too little; it needs enlargement to come up to the Christian standard. Who can eat a feast alone? Who can enjoy a song if he alone hears it? Christianity never isolates men. If you can submit to isolation, you have lost the Christian spirit, or never had it. Brotherhood, fellowship, companionship, kingdom, church, assembly, one blood, all nations—such words constitute the terminology of the true Christian economy.

II. The prominent part that woman is to play in the Christian dispensation is suggested. "They spake unto the women that resorted thither."

1. Religion is good for women and children, is the skeptic's taunt. Does this gibe disturb you, cold-hearted, indifferent man? Do you despise the church because there are so many women in it? Do

you say, "Men are giving up the church"? Many who think themselves wise, regard religion as a silly superstition that belongs to women and children, and ignorant people, and, with blatant speech, hurl their cutting epithets at the Church of Christ, that is dearer to the Master than the apple of his eye. Because of this, some weak-minded, faint-hearted Christians hang their heads in shame, and for the same reason, many on the outside refuse to enter the church. Men who rail at the church in this way are blind and short-sighted, silly babblers, lacking in deep insight and wise discrimination—unworthy mockers, wanting in appreciation for the truest and noblest things in life. Such people are always in evidence. If you remain out of the church till all men speak well of it, you will never enter its sacred precincts. The religion of Christ has always been spoken against. Do not expect bad men to speak well of that which is a standing reproach to the lives they live. Do not expect Satan to approve of that which is set for his overthrow. Do not expect wickedness to approve of righteousness, darkness to approve of light, or the kingdom of Satan to approve of the kingdom of God. Do not think that because men can find something to criticize in the church that there is justice in their contention.

2. Let me try to set the case in its true light. You reproach the church because it is filled with women. Let me point you to the rival institutions that are filled with men. Begin with the saloon; is this your ideal institution? Here there is no lack of men. Now, let me point you to the gambling-den; here the women you despise so much are conspicuously absent. Next go into the smoking-car; how

do you like the surroundings? There are no women there. Next let us visit the penitentiary; ninety-eight in every hundred are men. Let me tell you a truth that all history will corroborate; woman is the savior of society. Society is never stronger than its women. If you want to know what is right and pure, go and let your wife tell you. I would rather have her instincts than your logic. I count not those the friends of the race who despise noble womanhood. Woman represents the love and patience of the world. Woman is the presiding genius of the home. Why do you not despise it on that account? Woman is in the forefront of all moral reform. Why do you not curse every effort that has for its object the betterment of the world, for that reason? Women keep the lights shining and the fire burning at night while men are reveling in debauchery and drunkenness. Women soothe the wounds that men inflict. Women's eyes are sleepless with watching while men lie down in drunken stupor.

To those who hurl the mocking gibe, again I say, "Thou fool." Yes, women are the saviors of the church, and God will be her Saviour when the mockers are cast down to destruction.

III. I discover from this incident that practical interest and importance centers in the particular rather than in the general.

1. There is a vast difference in days. In verse 12 we read, "We were abiding in the city certain days." These, in the main, were uneventful days that had to be lived. It was the one day in the midst of certain days that held in its grasp the destiny of souls. It is the one day of many, the one hour of the day, the one minute of the hour, that

is big with destiny. For these particular times all other times exist. There are fateful hours, crucial moments on which great issues hang, that come to all of us. Here, however, is the important thought. We do not know when the crucial moment will come. We do not know when the clock of destiny will strike. We must go through the wearing grind of routine service. We must be on duty when the moment of fate arrives. God always picks the faithful routine worker for the great occasion. We say we will wait for the great occasion; small opportunities seem trivial and unimportant, or we think it beneath our dignity to give attention to little things. There could be no greater mistake. Often things that seem to us very small are very great, and those that seem great oftentimes are, in reality, very unimportant. When the neighbor lifted John B. Gough out of the gutter, he performed, perhaps, the greatest act of his life; when Moses E. Lard spoke to the outcast, who sat fishing by the side of the stream, on the Lord's Day, and invited him to attend church, thereby starting him on the upward journey that led to his becoming a great preacher of the cross, he performed one of the greatest acts of his life. Let us not despise the day of small things. True life is made of many little things well done.

2. There is a vast difference in women. "We sat down and spake unto the women." "A certain woman named Lydia," gave attention. Are not all women alike? Alas, no. Variety is a striking peculiarity of the universe in which we live. Paul and Silas spake unto the women. The one woman heard; a hundred, it may be, heard nothing. The one woman was the child of destiny. Some can be

lumped together in the mass; some must stand out as individuals. Do not, however, imagine that even all good people can be conspicuous for the same thing. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another of the stars.

Another fact to be remembered is this: For every leader God needs a great many followers, and oftentimes the followers are just as worthy of honor as the leaders. We honor the great general; let us not forget the thousands of brave men whose bones lie bleaching on the battlefield. We honor the man who plants the flag on the rampart; let us not forget the hundreds whose bodies fall in the trench beside the wall, and over which the victor walks to perform his deed of valor. When you see some one do a really great thing, do not be discouraged; if you feel that you can not do that thing, perhaps you can do something equally great. All can not do the same thing equally well, but each can do something a little better than any one else can do it.

**IV. Some of the characteristics of a noble soul are shown.**

"A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple."

1. Lydia was an industrious woman. She had an occupation. Did you ever notice how impossible it is to do anything for an idle person? Do you imagine that people could be so much better church members if they had nothing to do? You are greatly mistaken. They would be worth nothing. . When you preach, earnestly covet the privilege of addressing busy people. Your words will make no impression on idle souls. If you want work done, go out

and find busy people to do it; then you may know it will be done.

The fact that Lydia had a calling suggests that there is no impropriety in a woman engaging in any worthy business. It is cause for rejoicing that we live in an age that opens the door of opportunity to women. It is no disgrace to sell purple. It is no disgrace to do any worthy work well. True, there are some callings better fitted to women than others. There are good reasons why women should not compete with men in every form of business or professional activity, but she should be granted the privilege of engaging in any honest work for which she is capacitated by nature and training.

2. Lydia was a religious woman, and in this she was true to her sex and her nature. A woman is never so much a woman as when she lifts her soul to God. A vain, frivolous, godless woman is an incongruous sight, a sort of discord in the harmony of nature. That this unlovely thing should be, calls for profound regret. When woman turns her back on Christ it is, indeed, a sad picture of ingratitude, for he has done more to right her wrongs and give to her the privileges that properly belong to her, than any one that ever stood upon this earth.

I would also have you notice that there is no necessary conflict between business and religion, as some imagine. A business woman may be a praying woman. One who engages in what is called secular work may also enter the Church of God. There are some people who stay out of the church because they imagine they can not succeed in business and be a Christian. This is a woeful mistake; any business that is incompatible with Christianity is a bad



business, and any method of doing business that is contrary to Christian principles, is a false method. True and lasting success in business can only be had through the application of Christian principles to business methods.

3. Lydia was a hospitable woman. "If ye have judged me faithful, come into my house and abide." Here is the characteristic of a true, genuine nature: "All mine is thine." To lodge the stranger is a gracious thing. Especially was that true in the days of the apostles, and it is equally true in some places now. The stranger needs sympathy, company; we are all brethren. I fear we have not touched bottom yet. Here is the deeper secret; we need fellowship. This is the Christian impulse. When Christ takes up his abode in our hearts we want fellowship with all that are his. "Come into my house and abide" points to a double need. In this day of stress and storm, of rush and mad impetuosity, I fear we are in danger of losing some of the sweetest and most blessed things of life, and, among other things, I fear that the art of hospitality and sociability is in danger of being lost. May God forbid!

**V. The fact is brought to light that Lydia's conversion conformed to the process seen in the other cases presented in the Book of Acts.**

1. There is always a divine side in conversion. "Whose heart the Lord opened." Do not draw from this language the conclusion that God wrought a miracle on Lydia in securing her conversion. Rest assured God never over-rides the freedom of the individual in the process of conversion. God opens men's minds in ten thousand ways—by the circumstances and incidents of life, but never by an irre-



sistible exercise of power that destroys the free agency of the individual. God opened the hearts of the Pentecostians that they attended to Peter by the wonderful demonstrations of his power. God opened the heart of the jailer, that he attended to Paul, by the earthquake. God sometimes opens men's hearts by showing them how near they stand to death, as in the case of severe sickness, but in all cases human freedom is left intact. But there is a divine side in the gospel; the plan is God's, the facts of the gospel are of divine origin, the pardon is a divine favor, and the Holy Spirit a divine gift.

2. There is also a human side in conversion. Paul did the preaching. God's treasure is committed to "earthen vessels." "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Lydia attended to the words spoken by Paul; this is always necessary. God can not convert an inattentive person. Lydia evidently believed and repented, as the context shows, and the record says she was baptized. Here we have the identical process shown in other conversions: beautiful, rational, logical and necessary. Faith, repentance and baptism were present; each necessary to produce its own change, and the whole process eventuating in conversion. This is not strange. Man has the same nature—physical, intellectual and moral, wherever found. Human nature never changes. It follows, therefore, that the process of conversion never changes. The steps were identical in every case of New Testament conversion, and the process will remain the same to the end of time. We may go farther and say that the process of conversion, in principle, has always been the same. It has always required faith to change the heart. Under the

Mosaic dispensation this was true; the facts were not identical, but the principle was the same. It required faith to produce a change of heart, and repentance to produce a changed life, and the state or relation to God was determined by divinely specified conditions. This should admonish us, however, not to send people to the law of Moses to ascertain the facts to be believed in order to change of heart, or the commands to be obeyed in order to change of state.

**VI. Last of all, I inquire, "Did Lydia have her infant children baptized?" Such has been the contention of some.**

The cases of what are called "household baptisms" have been used as a justification for the practice of infant baptism, for a long time. Let us examine very briefly the cases mentioned.

1. The jailer and his household were baptized. "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway" (Acts 16:33). It is assumed that there were infants in the household, but the reading of the preceding and following verses ought to have prevented this mistake. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Then those taken into consideration were old enough to hear and understand preaching. "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Then those who had been baptized were evidently believers; this excludes infants.

2. Take next the household of Cornelius; the angel in instructing Cornelius to send for Peter, said, "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and

all thy house shall be saved." That no infants were included is shown by the account. Both Cornelius and his household were to be saved through the hearing of words.

3. I will mention next the household of Stephanas. In 1 Cor. 1:16, Paul says, "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas; besides I know not whether I baptized any other." It is assumed that there were infants in this household, but in 1 Cor. 16:15 we read, "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This shows that there were no infants, or that they were not taken into the account, since infants can not addict themselves to the ministry of the saints.

4. Last of all we come to the case under consideration. It is plainly stated that Lydia's household were baptized (verse 15). Were there any infants in this household? It is, to say the least, highly improbable, for the following reasons: It is not known that Lydia was married; but there is a presumption against it, since she was a traveling merchant, a business scarcely suitable for married women. If she were married, it is not known that she had children; probably not, since a family would be likely to keep her at home. If she were married and had children, they were probably grown up, or she would not be away from them. If she were married, had children and they were small, she probably left them at home; she would scarcely carry infants or very small children with her, being engaged in business.

Who, then, it may be asked, constituted her

household? Evidently her servants and helpers. As she was a traveling business woman, stopping doubtless a few weeks or months at each place, she would evidently need to maintain a household, and they would necessarily be mature people.

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May we not admire the beautiful harmony seen in all the cases of conversion recorded? The process is so simple, plain and logical that "The wayfaring man, though a simpleton, need not err therein." How sad that it should have been mystified to the perplexing of honest souls.

When the way is so clear, why delay a single moment? Do not trifle with your conscience and convictions.

Where do you stand? Do you believe? Then go forward in repentance and baptism and complete the divine process. Have you believed and repented? Then the command given to Saul of Tarsus applies to you. Do you say, "I do not believe"? Then in the name of reason, investigate, study, consider, reach a conclusion. Let nothing take precedence of this work. You can not occupy neutral ground. Jesus has said, "He that is not for me is against me."

## CHAPTER XII.

### **The Conversion of the Jailer.\***

Read Acts 16: 16-34 as a preparation for this study.

TEXT.—Acts 16: 29-31: "And he called for lights, and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

1. Paul never forgot to go to the place of prayer. In verse 13 we read, "And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by the river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither." "And it came to pass as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by her soothsaying." Paul began his Christian life in prayer. When the Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision, to send him to Saul, he said, "Arise and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth."

This is characteristic of all true men of God. In this they show their kinship to the Master, who was a man of much earnest prayer. He spent whole nights in prayer. On nothing did he lay more emphasis than on the duty of prayer. Do not despise the man of prayer. He will be a battering-ram that

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\*A treatment of this incident in Parker's *Apostolic Life* brings out some of the thoughts embodied in this chapter.

will beat down any door of opposition. Whenever a man loses faith in prayer, he has lost his greatest element of power. Queen Mary declared she feared the prayers of John Knox more than the armies of her enemies.

A man who has a proper conception of the greatness and difficulty of Christian service is necessarily driven to God for help. So Paul felt, and hence he declared, "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me."

I gather from the study of this lesson that:

**I. God's ways are not man's ways.**

1. This was the first introduction of the gospel into Europe. Paul had just been sent over into Macedonia. The divine method of work is here conspicuously illustrated. A more stupendous enterprise can not well be imagined. Notice the great results that have come out of this. Here is the beginning of the end of the gladiatorial show. Here is the beginning of the end of the worst form of slavery ever known. Here began the elevation of woman in Europe. Here began the downfall of pagan literature and pagan religion. Here the force began to operate that was destined to revolutionize the most intelligent and progressive of the five grand divisions of the earth, and give to it the highest form of civilization that the world has ever known up to the present time; and if other countries, notably America and Australia, compete for this distinction, it is because these countries have been peopled and developed by Europeans.

How would we have managed such a stupendous enterprise? By fuss and display. We lay corner-stones, and engage in pomp and parade, but

let us know that great things are not necessarily noisy. God's ways are not man's ways. We poor, weak mortals imagine we fortify ourselves by bluster and brag. Not so with God. He moves quietly and serenely in the consciousness of infinite power.

2. Let us not imagine that a cause is great in proportion to the noise it makes. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Great forces are often silent forces. Power is not necessarily ostentatious. On the contrary, loud pretension is indicative of weakness. Conscious power can afford to be modest. Alas, we often mistake all this, and imagine that men and causes are great in proportion to the outward show. There can be no greater mistake than this.

## II. Paul and Silas got into trouble by doing a good deed.

1. A certain female slave had a spirit of divination. She followed Paul and Silas, and said, "These men are the servants of the most high God." Paul exorcised the spirit, thereby incurring the wrath of the owners. The course Paul pursued, at first seems strange. This testimony would seem to have been to Paul's advantage, but the reason for his act is plain. To permit this act of the damsel to go unchallenged would have shown an alliance with evil. We have a case in point in the whiskey power in our day. It pays tax to the Government. This is an alliance, and, in a sense, an endorsement. All laws by which the people share in the profits of the traffic are in principle wrong. They are the strongest bulwark of the nefarious business, at the present time.

2. Let us notice, also, that wicked men do not scruple to disguise their sentiments; otherwise the



multitude would have sympathized with the girl. A favorable impression would have been made for Paul. On the contrary, popular prejudice was appealed to. They were charged with introducing Jewish customs, which was an offense to be resisted. What did they care for Jewish custom? To-day the liquor power cries out for personal liberty. What does the liquor power care for liberty? It is the same old trick of the devil. An appeal to prejudice is always the cloak of a weak or a bad cause. Truth is never placed under any such necessity. Beware of the man who uses the prejudice of the people as his weapon of offensive or defensive warfare.

3. That wickedness pays no regard to justice, is a fact here shown. No opportunity was given for defense. Magistrates catered to the mob, and Paul and Silas suffered. They were cast into prison. Consider their miserable condition: backs bleeding; sitting in dungeon; feet in stocks; mind racked with sense of wrong; no cause for this ill-treatment. How would such treatment affect sensitive natures? Who could bear it patiently? Only those conscious of their integrity and with a strong faith in the ultimate triumph of right. Only those who rest serene in the confidence that the Almighty arm will be stretched forth for their deliverance. He whose strength is in God, can endure all things.

III. The unexpected plays a prominent part in life.

1. There was unexpected music. At midnight Paul and Silas sang praises to God. Listen as the gloomy apartments of the old prison echo with the strange music. A prison turned into a church!

Every place may be a place of prayer. The streets may be turned into aisles of a cathedral if those who walk them have a thankful, worshipful, prayerful spirit. Have we not allowed too much of the joy to be taken out of life? Have we not allowed ourselves to become too much the victim of circumstances? What has become of the joy of Christian service? I fear many of us have lost the best part of our religion: namely, its happiness, its joy, its triumphant song. It was not always so. Paul and Silas could sing in prison. The martyrs sang amidst the flames. A Christian ought to be the happiest man in the world.

2. Strange circumstances may be used for the highest good. Suppose Paul and Silas had brooded over their wrongs; grown distrustful and complaining; would God have heard them? Who shall say? But this we may say: They would have greatly aggravated their sufferings and they would have robbed us of a splendid legacy in the form of a beautiful example of Christian confidence and heroism.

We may never be in a stone prison, but we may be in even darker dungeons. The soul's despair, the heart's keen hunger, the gnawing anguish shut up the soul in the blackest darkness. There is no prison so dark as that of despair. In such a prison there is no song of hope; there is no faith that lifts the soul above the gloom of circumstance and enables it to dwell in the effulgent light that beams from the throne of God. Better, a thousand times, to be thrust into the dungeon of the literal stone prison, than to be cast into the dungeon of despair.

What are you doing? Brooding over your wrong? It is an unprofitable business. A Christian ought

never to be in prison. Take God's view and not man's view. The latter never turns darkness into day.

3. There was an unexpected audience. The Revised Version says: "The prisoners were listening." Do not imagine no one sees you do good. "No man lives unto himself." You sing for others. The prisoners are listening. How many voices follow us with affectionate yearning. The voices of father, mother, husband, wife, friend, save many a man. How short-sighted we are. We imagine no one sees us. We think people are indifferent to our song; therefore, we will not sing. We talk of not being appreciated. What a mistake we are making; our neighbors are listening, our children are watching. The world knows much more about us than we think. A great American poet sang about leaving "footprints on the sands of time" for some one coming after to see. Let us not imagine that we can not influence men now, to-day. Let us not forget that "the prisoners are listening." Let us also know that we are appreciated for all we are worth.

The other side is equally true. The children heard you blaspheme, heard you ridicule sacred things. Your failings and shortcomings are noticed; you can't hide from your fellowmen; your meanness is understood. You can deceive yourself easier than you can deceive others. Many a man thinks he is hiding himself from the gaze of his fellowmen, whose meanness is thoroughly understood.

We should learn from this circumstance to let nothing interrupt our religion. Far better be like Paul. He can not be headed off in the matter of

prayer. If he does not pray at noon, he will at night. He never lost his religion.

Show me the uncomplaining Christian, and I will show you one whose life is a benediction. Where is our joy? I fear we are losing the art of being happy. Maybe it is because the rugged faith characteristic of the true disciple is lacking.

**IV. The process and fruits of conversion are the same here as elsewhere.**

1. A miraculous element was present in this case. There was an earthquake, but its purpose was not to convert. It gave no evidence of pardon. It did, however, vindicate the mission and character of Paul and Silas. The jailer called for a light and sprang in and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Here we get at the philosophy of the miraculous. Miracles are for signs, for attestation of something extraordinary. In the case of the apostles they vindicated their divine mission and superhuman message. The effect on the jailer was characteristic.

2. Paul's answer was exactly suited to him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." He had never believed. Nothing can come before faith. This answer was different from the one given to Saul or to the three thousand. Why? Because the position of the hearer was different. In order to make Paul's answer practical, a sermon had to be preached. "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" When the whole process was complete, the jailer had heard, had believed, had repented and had been baptized, which are the steps in all conversions. The answer to be given to the question depends on the position

of the inquirer. To the believing Pentecostians, Paul said, "Repent and be baptized." In the jailer's case he began with faith and ended with baptism.

It seems that circumstances have much to do with our earnestness. At sunset the jailer cared little for such a question. Having stood close to death, he felt differently. Many of the providences of life put men into the proper frame of mind to hear the sermon.

3. The fruits of conversion are here shown.

(1) He washed their stripes; he undid the past as far as he could. This is true conversion; find the man you wronged yesterday and make it right. Repentance that stops short of reparation is not genuine. I fear that this is not well understood. Men want to get off too easily. They would be glad if a good resolution could wipe out the past. A true conversion reaches back as well as forward.

(2) "He rejoiced." This comes after obedience. Joy is the result of duty done. Happiness is the fruit of conversion.

Here, too, a mistake is often made. Men speak of happiness as an evidence of conversion. Happiness depends upon the testimony. A lie, if agreeable, will make a man as happy as the truth, if it is believed. The happiness resulting from testimony can not be taken as evidence of the truth of the testimony. A man may be happy because he knows he is converted, but he does not know he is converted because he is happy. Conversion must have some better evidence than the feelings of the individual. It must rest on the indubitable testimony of God's Word; hence it must be scripturally accomplished.

This makes your duty clear. Have you never believed? Then Paul's words are your command. Have you believed? Then I give you Peter's answer on Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized." Have you believed and repented? Then I give you Ananias' answer to Saul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### **The Great Invitation; or, Whosoever Will May Come.**

TEXT.—Rev. 22: 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

1. The divinity of Christianity is proven by the Godlike scope of its purpose. We are told that God made of one blood all nations that dwell on the face of the earth. Then reason, and shall I not say justice, demands that God's offer of salvation shall be commensurate with his work in creation. Less than this would stand as an impeachment of his goodness and mercy. If the invitation were other than this it would stand self-condemned. How this word “whosoever” falls into the harmony and melody that vibrates throughout the sacred Scriptures. Listen, let us catch the rhythm of it all: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent”—the blessing as wide as the curse. “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed”—no limitation there. “The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the world as the waters cover the sea”—the largest imagery possible needed to express the fullness of the blessing. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law”—even the little islands are not forgotten in the plan.



Notice how the words of the Master drop into the rhythm: "Go preach the gospel to every creature," "Go teach all nations," "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them." Finally, the last words, uttered sixty years after he ascended to heaven, show his mind is unchanged: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thank God, Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." Thank God, there is never any note of discord in the Word of God. On the divine side, whether it be in creation or redemption, the harmony is complete. The divine will is the fountain of harmony, and where this is supreme the harmony is unbroken. The harmony of the universe is never disturbed, except when the divine will is contravened. This points unmistakably to the source of peace. When the human will is brought into subjection to the divine will, peace must be the ineffable result.

2. It must have been a great apocalypse for the apostle Peter when he said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." It was a hard lesson for a Jew to learn, and it required a miracle to teach it to him. It was a hard lesson for an elect nation to learn; in fact, it has not yet been learned. It has been a hard lesson for the elect in all ages to learn, who have failed to grasp the true doctrine of election; namely, election unto service, the election of the one or the few for the sake of the many. It is, however, a necessary lesson, and he is little fitted for real service until it is learned. Even the gospel was kept in narrow limits until the apostles grasped the lesson.

How these words "whosoever will" brush aside the doctrine of unconditional election unto eternal life. It is a broadside from heaven's batteries that sweeps away all walls of partition that divide the world into parties, cliques and clans. How it puts to shame all human systems in this regard. It takes man to do the small act. It takes man to erect barriers, and create systems, and invent badges and passwords and regalia of distinction. When I see him strut with his little trappings—tinsel, gold braid, feathers and sword—I say, how little he is after all. Is this the creature made in the divine image? Surely the angels blush to see it. But, no! Perhaps I am mistaken! Maybe they look on with amusement at the childish play, awaiting patiently the time of larger, fuller development. Draw your line around your little system, define its limitations, but when you do it I know it is human and not divine. Everything that is of God scorns limitations and despises little artificial barriers. The terms "race," "class" and "color" do not belong to God's kingdom. It deals only in words of largest scope and meaning. "World," "all men," "all nations," "whosoever will," are the words and phrases that enter into its vocabulary. Christianity, therefore, can not be forced into a corner. It never consents to vacate any part of the field. It demands the whole space, whether it be the world or the human heart, and in this it shows its celestial origin.

In connection with this wonderful passage, I call attention to the fact that:

**I. Those who give the invitation invest it with wonderful dignity.**

1. God, the Creator and Father of all, invites,

and he does it because he has ample, yea, infinite, resources at his command. He who owns all things says, "Come." It is not a mere courtesy. His heart has not outrun his judgment. His hospitality has not outstripped his ability. His provision is boundless, because his resources are immeasurable. It is no beggar that says, "Come!" Otherwise we might hesitate. It is the infinite God, able and willing to give, that invites. Every real want of every soul will be met. No one will ever go away disappointed. Hear him: "As I live, saith God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will you die?" "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto the people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Note well the words: "All people," not some people, not a few nice, congenial folks, not the rich or powerful, but "all people." That sounds like God were talking. There is no mistaking the source of such language. Who *could* say that but God? Who would say it but him? Put that invitation beside the invitations sent out by the little societies of men's forming, and you feel you have transferred your gaze from God's great sky to the ceiling of a little room, and yet some turn their backs on the church because they say it is narrow. Perish the thought! So long as the church is true to the great invitation of God it is the broadest institution in the world. Narrowness belongs to the things of man's making, never to the things of God's making. "Whosoever will." Listen, God is speaking! Shout the tidings, lift up the cry, carry it for-

ward, and cease not till it shall echo to every corner of this benighted, sin-cursed earth.

Parents invite their children to the family reunion. From far and near they come, children and grandchildren, with glad hearts, because they know they will be welcome, so welcome; because they know the completeness and harmony of the occasion will be broken by their absence; and if perchance some are absent how they are remembered, how their names pass from lip to lip. Father says: "There is where John sat at the last reunion," and mother says: "Mary sat yonder," and at the memory the tears trickle down over the wrinkled cheeks, but how much keener the anguish if the absence is voluntary and avoidable. No, you could not make father and mother believe such a thing as that; and that one would be a cold, hard-hearted son or daughter who would willingly miss such an occasion. But is not this a picture of God? He has prepared the feast and he invites his children. It took ages, yea, millenniums, to make all the preparations, but finally when the last detail had been completed, and ample provision had been made for every want and every one, he sent forth our elder brother to say come now, for all things are ready. "Lives there a man with soul so dead" that he can reject this invitation? Alas, alas, strange to say, many do turn their backs upon it and grieve the heart of the loving Father, who continues to call, and says, "All day long have I stretched forth my hand."

2. In the second place, Jesus the Saviour invites. The announcement of his advent awakens a great expectancy! There were angel voices in the upper

air singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men." This expectancy is fully met when Jesus stands forth and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." No such words were ever spoken before. How Godlike the sound. No uncertainty, no hint of possible inability or insufficiency. There breathes in this invitation the very confidence and power and fullness of God. If Jesus Christ had been less than God, this invitation would have overwhelmed him in shame and confusion long ages since. No mere man can say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and hold a place of respect among men for a single hour. It would amount to an intolerable egotism that would invite the scorn and contempt of men. This invitation of Christ shows the sincerity of God's invitation. Away with the idea that God is unreconciled. Away with the notion that he must be placated. Away with the doctrine that he must be importuned and persuaded to look with favor on his penitent child. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This means that as Christ felt, so God feels; as Christ spoke, so God speaks; hence said Paul, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Christ not only invited, but he opened up the way to God. He made it possible for sinful man to approach a sinless God. To this the prophet pointed when he said: "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." Also: "Go through, go through

the gates, prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." Man left to himself could not find the way of approach to God. The Grecian philosopher said: "Some one must come from heaven to instruct." Job sighed for a "days-man" to bridge the chasm between man and God. But when the world was rapidly falling into despair, the prophet pointed forward to the great highway of holiness which in the fullness of time was made ready. Finally one stood on the earth and declared: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Or, to change the figure, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture," or, again, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," "I am the bread that came down from heaven," "I am the water of life." Christ's invitation finds every man. Is he lost, Christ says, "I am the way;" is he homeless, he says, "I am the door;" is he in danger, he says, "I am the good shepherd;" is he hungry, he says, "I am the bread that came down from heaven;" is he thirsty, he says, "I am the water of life;" is he ignorant, he says, "I am the truth." His whole life was an invitation. Not only his words, but his manner, invited people to him, and the needy, the sorrowful, the outcasts found refuge and warmed themselves in his presence like the starving wayfarer on a winter's day finds warmth and comfort by the genial fireside of a hospitable home. In view of all this, how harmonious, how fitting, how inexpressibly appropriate are the last words we have from the Master, words uttered from his seat at the



right hand of God. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

3. In the next place, the Spirit invites: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." "Not by words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." Jesus said, "He" (the Holy Spirit) "shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you;" also, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come; but if I go away I will send him unto you; and when he is come he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and judgment"—the sin of rejecting Christ, the righteousness of Christ, and the judgment of Satan; but it all means that you and I may hear and embrace the great invitation and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom forever and forever. Not only does the Spirit invite, but he is grieved at our failure to respond or to entertain him; hence, we are told to "grieve not the Spirit," and more, "He makes intercession for us with groanings that can not be uttered." Then, if we are lost, it is because we reject the wooings of the Holy Spirit. What a trinity invites in the great invitation!

But this is not all. In the next place:

4. The church invites. This is the grandest company on earth. Men may ridicule the church, but this only shows that they misunderstand it or hate it because its presence in the world is a standing reproof to wickedness and sin. There is no such aggregation of men as those who compose the body whom Christ calls his bride. The world would be poor indeed without the church. She has been the foster mother of all that is highest and best in



every department of human thought and activity. Poetry, music, oratory, sculpture, painting, in short, every high and noble thing, has been quickened into a new life, and achieved its best expression through the ideals and impulses of the church. Government, education, social reforms, have reached their highest achievements through the influence and help of the church. Do not blush to be called a member of the church. Most unselfish heroism, truest devotion to duty, and noblest sacrifice are found in the church as nowhere else. The church is as dear to Christ as the apple of his eye. It is the champion of everything good and the foe of everything bad. It is loved by the best and hated by the worst people in the world. When the church says, "Come," the noblest company on earth invite. Do not talk to me about the failures of the church, but talk of the failures of those whom the church is trying to lift up and save for high and holy service. Do not tell me about the mistakes of the church, but tell me of the mistakes of those whom the church is trying to enlighten and fill with divine impulses. Do not speak of the sins of the church, but point, if you will, to the sins of those who, despite their blood-bought privileges, still disgrace their high and holy vocation. No, do not defame the church. I will not hear it. It is the only saving institution in the world to-day. It is the only institution that can live on, and live growingly, burdened with the follies, foibles and weaknesses of so many who are faithless and false to its principles. But, please God, it is gradually shaking off its weights, cleansing its stains and sharpening its weapons for the final conflict with the powers of darkness, and it is destined

to shine forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners," pledged by the oath of God to final and glorious victory. No, when the church invites, do not sneer or treat it as a little thing. It is the choicest spirits of earth uniting their voices with the blessed trinity of heaven, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in pleading with you for your highest good. To laugh at such an invitation, is to laugh the laugh of the fool.

5. The angels invite. What an inspiring thought. They are interested in all that pertains to men. The cherubim, overshadowing the mercy-seat and gazing down upon it, symbolize the interest of the angels in human redemption. They sang at the advent of the Son of man, and ministered to him after his temptation; they announced his resurrection and accompanied him at his ascension, and we are told that they rejoice over the repentance of sinners, and minister to those who are heirs of salvation. Truly, it is a great invitation when all heaven and the best on earth unite in saying, "Come."

In the study of the text we are led to consider:

II. Who are invited. The invitation is very **sweeping in its scope.\***

"Whosoever will" leaves no one out. It is all-embracing in its purpose.

1. We see from this that the young may come. The age limit is here set. Whenever a person is old enough to will he is old enough to come.

(1) There have been two radical mistakes at this point. Some have sought to bring persons into the church without their will or consent, yea, long

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\*In a sermon of the late Dr. Talmage this point is forcefully elaborated.

before they could exercise intelligent choice. This is in clear violation of the terms of invitation. "Whosoever will" points to those who are competent to choose. Infants are excluded not only because they can not choose, but because they have no need of choosing. Having no personal sin, they have no need of pardon. But says one, they have original or inherited sin. I answer, whatever they lost in the first Adam without their choice, they gain in the second Adam without their choice. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." If there is such a thing as original sin (and I will not digress to discuss the question here) it is done away in Christ; but that there is such a thing as willful sin or sin from choice, no one will deny, and as a consequence there is spiritual death. Hence, unregenerate man is dead in trespasses and sins. But if this spiritual death resulted from choice, so spiritual life must result from choice, and this is in harmony with Scripture teaching. Man heard, believed and obeyed Satan and died. Man hears, believes and obeys Christ and lives. Hence, the invitation is addressed to those who are old enough to hear, believe and obey on their own account. Father and mother can not believe for child, nor friend for friend. Each must act for himself. Even God will not over-ride the independent volition of his child. He hands you the cup of salvation, but he will not force you to drink. He offers you pardon, but he will not compel you to accept it. "Whosoever will, may come."

(2) The second mistake is the exact opposite of the first. Instead of trying to bring infants into the church without their choice or consent, young people, when old enough to make choice, are re-

jected or discouraged, when they present themselves, on the ground that their knowledge is insufficient. Of the nineteen hundred years since Christ came, eighteen hundred years have been partially wasted in misdirected efforts. Until Robert Raikes began his work, there was no organized effort to save the young. The church was regarded as an institution belonging mainly to the middle-aged and the old. There was no Bible teaching for the young, no Christian Endeavor societies, or young people's meetings of any kind. All speaking and praying in the church was done by a few old people. Such a thing as young people lifting up their voices in public prayer was never dreamed of. In a few pious families the children were required to attend church, but it was a very dry and uninteresting place for them. They had no part or lot in the service. The general policy seemed to be to let the young people go the downward road, and then, after they had drunk well of the cup of sin, to set the preacher after them. If he failed, the blame was laid on God, because he did not put forth an act of irresistible grace to save them. Many drifted comfortably along with the idea that God would act for the salvation of their children in his own good time, if, perchance, they were so fortunate as to belong to the elect. If not, who, they said, shall reply against God? "Hath not the potter power over the clay to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?" Thank God, we are getting over some of our foolishness on this question. We are beginning to understand that Christianity is intended for the young as well as for the old. Many had been so scared by the phantom of infant church membership

that they had rushed to the other extreme, which is even more dangerous, if any comparison is allowable. But let us hope that that day has passed, never to return. There is a vast difference between infants and children ten or twelve years old, who have reached the age of accountability and know good from evil and can choose between them. It is unfortunate for children to reach the age of sixteen and eighteen, or older, not having obeyed the gospel. Their chances for ever responding to the gospel appeal grow less with each advancing year. Every year spent in sin complicates the problem of conversion and makes it more difficult. Statistics show that conversions are more numerous between the ages of sixteen and twenty than at any other time in life. There is a psychological reason for the appeal to the young. If people would study psychology more and theology less, they would meet with greater success in propagating the gospel. "My child, give me thy heart," is not only the call of the Father, but it is based on a knowledge of the child nature. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." The man who penned these words showed a deep insight into the child mind. Fathers and mothers, how can you sleep quietly while your child is unsaved? Do you ever think over this, and pray over it? Do you realize that every day that passes is a day of peril? Why allow men to go to the bottom before trying to lift them up? Why allow the young to waste the best years of life in the service of Satan without an effort to prevent it? Answer you who can. Is it

not easier to keep a train on the track than to put it back after it is off? Is it not easier to curb a fiery steed than to check it when once control is lost? Do you say you want the children to understand? Where is your limit? How much do you want them to understand? Do you want them to understand all about God? All about sin? All about atonement? All about Christ and the Holy Spirit? The proudest minds, after years of study, can grasp these subjects only in a meager way. An eternity may be too short a time for the comprehension of the infinities of God. I fear you have confounded the gospel with theology. In the apostolic day men could learn enough in a single sermon to become Christians. The average Bible-school pupil to-day knows more about Christ than the first three thousand converts knew. A child can trust the Saviour even better than many older people. Teachers in the Lord's Day school, do you grasp the idea? Your mission is to bring your pupils to Christ. This is the goal of your endeavor. You may have a task to perform that parents have neglected. Do not put off your work. Delay is often fatal. Young people, remember that heaven and hell lie in opposite directions. You are not standing still. You are going toward one or the other. We hear much said about sowing wild oats. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I can tell the fortunes of young people on broad lines. It is, accept Christ and achieve true success or reject him and meet with failure. Religion will put no handcuffs on the young. It will take away from them no real privilege. It will deprive them



of no real pleasure. It fences in the poisonous trees only. It builds the wall only at the edge of the precipice. It puts no prohibition upon the trees of the garden that are good for food. It takes away no liberties where there are no dangers. "No good thing is withheld from them that walk uprightly."

Do you say you are too young to be a Christian? But you are not too young to die. The graves in the cemetery are not all long graves.

"There is a reaper whose name is Death,  
And with his sickle keen,  
He reaps the bearded grain,  
And the flowers that grow between."

As long as death "treads with equal step the palaces of the rich and the huts of the poor," let no one say, "I am too young to be a Christian."

Would that all the flowers that grow in the field of our common humanity could be wreathed into a garland for Him who has not only glorified manhood in its prime and in its old age and weakness, but has hallowed childhood and made it a sacred thing.

2. Let us learn also that the old may come. Suppose a man has lived out his life, and only the last flickering flame is left burning; suppose he is blind and deaf and lame; suppose his powers for service are all gone; can such a one come? Thank God, yes, if he will. "Whosoever will." These words express the only limitation. God's mercy knows no limitation, except such as man himself imposes. In one sense the older a man is, the more he needs Christ. It is hard for one to grow old without the comforts that the religion of Christ affords. Sight gone, hearing gone, taste gone, the



world slipping away, then if Christ is absent, what an awful state. The old sometimes have a feeling of being in the way. Alas, that this should ever be so! Should father and mother ever be in the way? They sat up with you when you were sick, cared for you when you were helpless, loved you with an undying affection; are they now in your way? Shame on you if this is so! God pity and forgive your ingratitude. Old age is in some ways an affecting sight. The old have a timid, shrinking manner; they look at you with a sort of wonder in their eyes; they reach out to you a trembling hand; they walk with a tottering step. Is it not a pitiful sight? Truly this is a hard world for the old when the power to grasp and hold it is gone. If Christ is not theirs they stand with empty hands and empty hearts. That which they trusted in has slipped away. Surely then this invitation is for the old. They, of all others, need the hope and comfort that religion can give. It seeks to provide a better cane and better spectacles than man can furnish. It seeks to give the enduring things for those that are passing away. How many of the old pilgrims Jesus has put to sleep. How many weary eyes he has gently closed in death. Did I say old age is an affecting sight? Let me hasten to make correction. An aged Christian is the most beautiful object on earth. Why should we feel sorry for him? Soon he will be clothed upon with immortal youth. Soon his eyes shall behold the beauties that never fade. "Whosoever will, may come." Then, thank God, the old may come.

3. In this text we learn that the bad may come. Men talk of God's grace as though it could be meas-

ured by a tape-line or weighed in a pair of scales. When will men realize that God's grace is infinite, that the ocean of God's love is boundless? Love is measured by sacrifice; hence God's love is infinite, for he gave an infinite sacrifice. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The apostle reasons that if God gave his Son, he will with him freely give all things. This means that no one is outside the pale of God's mercy by his consent. No one is too low to be reached by the love and mercy of God. A man may trifle with his convictions so long that he thereby assassinates his moral nature and renders himself incapable of responding to God's appeal, and thus be hopelessly lost; but so long as desire or power to will remains, hope remains. I have known people to worry lest they might have committed the unpardonable sin referred to by Christ, but it seems to me the very fear of such a thing is proof conclusive that the sin has not been committed. Do I say too much when I declare that no sin for which there is repentance is unpardonable?

But I hear some one say:

(1) "I am not good enough to come." "I must stay away until I get better." Do not deceive yourself. Men do not get better by staying away from Christ. If they could, Christ would not be a necessity.

"If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all."

What you need is pardon, and this God alone can bestow, and that too on his own terms. But I really rejoice to hear you say, "I am not good enough."

It is such a one that is just good enough to come. The man who is conscious of sin and hates it, is the one Christ invites. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them white as wool," saith the Lord. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let them return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon." The feeling of unworthiness indicates a proper frame of mind in one who would come to Christ.

(2) But here is another type of man. He says, "God has not been good to me." To such a one let me propound a few questions. How much do you deserve that you have not received? On what ground of merit do you base your demands for benefit? What sort of return have you made for what you have received? Is this too general? Let me be more specific. Where did you come from? Home, did you say? Who gave it to you? Do you eat every day? Who supplies you? What do you have that is really your own? Did you ever create anything? Whose water do you drink? Whose air do you breathe? Listen to your respiration. Who keeps your heart beating? God not good to you! Poor, blind, ungrateful mortals. Do not shut your eyes to God's mercies which are renewed every hour, and turn your back upon his offers of grace. Open your eyes to see what God has done for you and let the goodness of God lead you to repentance.

I have heard of an earthly father who refused to forgive an erring child. Not so with the heavenly Father. "He is not willing that any should perish."

The door of mercy is never closed. It is the door of man's heart that is shut, and it is this that grieves the loving heart of the Saviour. "Behold," he says, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him." Morning, noon and night he stands knocking, and it is man's coldness and unwillingness to open the door that breaks his loving heart. "Behold," he says, "now is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation." To this the prophet looked forward when he said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their mind and write it on their heart, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."

(3) There is still another type of man. He says, "I am wicked, I am lost, I need Christ, but I am afraid I can not hold out faithful to the end. If I felt sure I could persevere I would start." Answer me this. Do you gain strength by delay? Will you be stronger by to-morrow? Will you make no effort because you can not see the end from the beginning? Does the athlete see the end when he starts in the race? Does the farmer see the end when he sows his field? No, no. We must walk by faith and not by sight. It is so everywhere. It is the man of faith that wins. All heaven is pledged to the assistance of the man who will make an honest effort. If you are afraid of failure with Christ, is there any possible hope without him? The folly of such a position is clear. "Turn you, for why will you die?"

No moral condition can stand in the way. Lack

of knowledge can not hinder. God's attitude does not hinder. It is all and only a question of will.

4. We may also learn from the text that the good may come. That there is a great difference, not only in the actual moral status, but in the moral propensities, can not be doubted. Some seem to be more inclined to evil than others. Their appetites, desires and impulses are strongly set toward evil. They follow eagerly after that which is degrading, demoralizing and vicious. Life with them is either a continual conflict, both within and without, or it is a complete surrender to the evil one. On the other hand, some seem to have but little trouble in leading a moral and comparatively upright life. They apparently have but little difficulty in governing their appetites. Vice does not appeal to them strongly. There seems to be no fierce conflict with evil, no struggle to keep the body under. To live a righteous, upright life seems to require but little effort. They move quietly along, leading irreproachable lives, generally respected, highly esteemed. We sometimes hear the question raised, Does such a man need Christ? Now, I am the last one to disparage morality or to lack in appreciation for the morally upright man, but it can not be too strongly insisted upon that morality will not save. While a man can not be saved without it, yet that of itself falls far short of the demands in the case.

(1) The idea that morality can save, entirely ignores the fact of sin. While some are much better than others, yet none are perfect. "There is none righteous, no, not one." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." None can claim salvation on the ground of perfection. If a man has

even one sin, and where is the man in his right mind that will deny that he is a sinner, how shall he escape? What shall he offer to purchase his pardon? He has nothing to give; a life of righteousness, do you answer? But this already belongs to God by right. If he has one sin charged against him he can never wipe it out by any act of his. All he is and has are not his own, except in the sense of stewardship. How, then, can he pay God with the coin that already belongs to God? If a man could commence at any given point and make his future life perfect, it would only square the account from that time forward; he could accumulate nothing to atone for the past.

(2) The idea that morality can save, ignores the fact that salvation is of grace. This follows from that which precedes. If sin is a universal malady, if all have come short, and if man has nothing that he can offer, then where is his hope? Only in the mercy of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it" (the salvation) "is the gift of God." But God has shown us that this gift of salvation can only be enjoyed through the atoning merits of the blood of Christ. The promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel . . . how that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." "If Christ died for all, then we are all dead." "God has included all under sin that he might have mercy upon all." This is the doctrine of Scripture. Salvation is God's gift of grace, but the basis of it all is the atoning merit of the blood of Christ. It is the sacrifice of Christ that enables God to be just and the justifier of him that believes. "We are all the

children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." The doctrine that morality can save makes void the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, not only the morally good *may* come, but the morally good *should* come. They are still imperfect and need God's pardon, and they must plead, not their own righteousness, but that of Christ. If they have less struggle than some in order to do right, the greater will be their responsibility, and no doubt more will be demanded of them, for "unto whom much is given, of them much will be required." Moreover, their example is needed. To point out the way to the outrageously bad imposes the obligation to walk in that way, for thus only can the teaching be most strongly enforced.

Finally the doctrine of altruism, the doctrine of Christ, demands that the morally good should come. The question in the last analysis is not a question of salvation for salvation's sake, but of salvation for service' sake. I am saved, not for my own sake, but for the world's sake. I am saved to become a savior, and he only is in position to do the most for others who takes his stand by the side of Him who withheld not himself, but freely gave himself as a ransom for many. To stand aloof and claim salvation on the ground of merit, is to withhold one's hand from the great work of lifting up the world and bringing it back to the bosom of the Father.

If a man can lead an upright life with but little effort, he should not claim salvation on the ground of merit, and stand aloof from the only force set for the salvation of the world, but rather thank God for the natural advantage vouchsafed to him, and feel that by that sign he is called to a larger, fuller



service than is laid upon the average man. Let the moral man know, no matter to what moral heights he may have attained, that he too is embraced in the invitation, "Whosoever will, may come."

Listen to the call. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." Then do not say, I am too young or I am too old, I am too bad or I am too good, but gladly respond to the call and say: "Here am I, Lord, send me."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### **The Great Salvation.\***

TEXT.—Heb. 2:3: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation; which at the first having been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”

1. Every person ought to be borne down continually with two great desires. The first is a desire for his own salvation. This is not selfishness, because personal salvation is the first qualification of one who would labor for the salvation of others. One who desires salvation for his own sake merely, utterly lacks the Christian spirit. Christianity is the farthest remove from selfishness. While it is necessary for every one to earnestly desire his own salvation, this merely leads up to and intensifies the second great desire; namely, the salvation of others, yea, of the whole world. I use the word “salvation” as indicating salvation from sin, temporal salvation, but this must eventuate in a future or eternal salvation, or its highest purpose is lost; consequently every Christian ought earnestly to desire to go to heaven, and take everybody else along.

Do you, Christian man, rejoice when you see souls coming to Christ? If not, pray God to give you a better heart. It is not hard to discover how some feel: when their friends come they are glad;

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\*I am indebted to “Natural Law in the Spiritual World,” by Drummond, for some of the lines of thought in this chapter.

when others come they are indifferent. Hear Paul, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren." "I suffer all things lest I should hinder the gospel of Christ." This is the Christian feeling and desire.

2. What is the greatest blessing conceivable for our own town, our county, our State, our nation? For every sick one to be restored? This would be a great boon, and certainly something to be desired, but it is not the greatest blessing. For every one to become rich? No, a thousand times, no. This would doubtless curse more people than it would bless. Let me suggest the greatest possible boon for every son and daughter of Adam's race—for every soul to be encircled in the arms of pardoning love. There is no greater blessing conceivable than this, for without this nothing else matters; all is lost.

3. "Why, then," it may be asked, "do not all accept Christ?" It is not that they need argument; that time has passed long ago. Many mentally accept the gospel facts; logic is not their most pressing need; neither do they need philosophy or rhetoric. Lilies and roses are beautiful, and useful in their way, but they can not take the place of bread; a hungry man cares little for them. Men's souls are starving for bread. Jesus said, "I am the bread of which, if you eat, you shall never hunger any more." What the world needs in order to satisfy its hunger, is Jesus.

4. Nine-tenths of those who do not accept Christ are simply neglecting it. Their trouble is in the heart, and not in the head at all. Men are apt to neglect that which simply takes hold of the head. This is illustrated in many ways. The successful

business man lays hold of his work with his heart; so of the successful professional man. If it is a mere head matter, failure is the inevitable result. The same is true of the successful poet, artist, musician. The successful man is one whose heart is enlisted. The man who will take hold of Christ with his heart will confess him. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," just as with the heart he believeth unto every good work.

Let us try to grasp the force of Paul's question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Three things are suggested by this text:

### **I. The necessity for escape.**

1. The first emphatic word in the passage is "*escape*." This suggests danger or peril. If man stands in no danger, then the word "*escape*" is meaningless, or, at most, it suggests something of small importance. (1) That man is exposed to great danger is shown by his actual relations to God while in a sinful state. Man is separated from God by disobedience, and separation from God is death. Life is correspondence with environment, as Mr. Drummond says and science teaches; and disobedience breaks the connection with God, and hence destroys the correspondence of the soul with God, who is its true environment. Hence we read: "Sin entered the world, and death by sin, so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." When Adam disobeyed God, death resulted; he no longer corresponded to, or harmonized with, his true environment. He had ceased to make his will correspond to the will of God. The same is true of every man in his sinful state. We are "dead

in trespasses and sins." This is a perilous situation. Unless this broken connection is re-established it means an eternal banishment "from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." It is not, however, a question of being lost hereafter; we are lost now. It is simply a question of redemption, of salvation, of binding man back to God. (2) The forebodings of conscience point to a future retribution; hence Shakespeare well says, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." This cowardice created by conscience is not the result of a direct revelation from God. It is found where the knowledge of the one true and living God has not gone. It seems to result from a revelation native to the soul. In heathen nations, and even among savage tribes, it is equally as potent as in Christian lands. If there is no peril, then conscience is a universal and perpetual lie. (3) That man is exposed to imminent peril is the teaching of God's Word. Jesus said: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Paul, writing to the Romans, said: "But unto them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also the Greek." In his speech before Felix, he reasoned of "righteousness, self-control and judgment to come." The writer of Hebrews says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment." He also says, "For if we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment

and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the enemy." But why multiply quotations? The New Testament bristles with the doctrine of future retribution, of awful peril to which the sinner is exposed, thus justifying the forebodings of conscience, and showing they point to something real and terrible.

2. The language of the text shows that there is no escape from this great danger except through the salvation provided by God. Man himself has nothing to offer. He is impotent, as is shown by the fact that the best brain and thought of the world have worked on the problem in vain. The blood of animals can not take away sin, and hence there is no escape through that channel. Paul clinches the argument in these masterly words: "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

The text is, however, pregnant with hope. While it points to awful peril, it suggests escape by means of a great salvation which was first set forth by the Lord and confirmed unto us by them that heard him. The argument is conclusive: Since there is awful peril; since man has discovered no way of escape; since God has provided a great salvation; how shall we escape if we neglect it?

**II. Let us turn our attention next to the danger of "neglect."**

1. Here many are making a serious mistake. They recognize the fact that to do wrong is bad and will bring ruin, but to simply neglect duty seems to be a small matter. To put temptation in a man's way, they confess, is wrong, but to take temptation

out of his way is overlooked. To steal an orphan's bread is cruel, but to neglect to feed him is a matter of indifference. To take poison will kill, but to neglect to eat wholesome food is not a serious matter. In short, the danger of neglect is entirely overlooked, or disregarded.

2. Can we not see there are two ways to destroy? The results of neglect are the same in ultimate effect, as actual deeds of wrong. One may rob the widow and orphan, and they starve; another neglects to feed them, and they perish. One man tempts his brother to sin, and he is lost; another neglects to rescue him, and he is ruined. One man deliberately goes the downward road, and comes to destruction; another neglects God's means of grace, with the same result.

3. God punishes for neglect in the physical, mental and spiritual worlds. Bind up your arm and it withers; put a bandage over your eyes and you become blind. Neglect to use any mental faculty and it is lost. Neglect spiritual work, church services, the Lord's Supper, Bible study, and you die spiritually. It is just as fatal to refuse to eat as to take poison; death results in either case.

4. Nature furnishes us very many examples along this line. Dr. Drummond in "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" uses the analogies of nature with much power. The fishes in the Mammoth Cave have no eyes to see; the power of vision is lost through failure to use the organ through lack of opportunity; the mole has its eyes sealed up because it can not use them; the animals that live deep down in the sea have no eye for a similar reason. God says that if you do not use you shall not have. This is the



meaning of the paradox, "From him that hath not shall be taken away that which he hath." You have a good impulse; use it or lose it. If lost, it will not return at your bidding. It is a good rule to give to those that ask, for your own sake; refuse and you will lose the power to give, through loss of desire. The evil of novel reading and theaters lies in the fact that men feel and do not act. They give no expression to the impulses awakened, and they are lost.

Here, then, we discover the two laws of destruction always operating. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Illustrations make this plain. The drunkard comes to poverty; the loafer also comes to poverty. This should be a great warning. You need not run headlong into sin to be lost. Simply neglect. You need not dig up your garden of strawberries; simply neglect them. You need not cut down your field of corn, or your orchard; simply neglect them. These laws operate all through this world, both in secular and religious things.

**III. Let us consider finally the great salvation offered.\***

1. Its greatness is exhibited, first of all, in its stupendous purpose. God's greatest work is the hoisting of the world out of sin. The world had made shipwreck; the vessel was going down with all hands on board. God Almighty rose up and brought into action all omniscience, omnipotence and love. A highway must be constructed; a bridge had to be built from earth to heaven. The highway of

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\*Some of the thoughts in this section are found in Talmage's *Sermons*, Vol. II., pp. 341-346.

holiness is God's greatest work. All great thinkers have their masterpieces: Bryant, his *Thanatopsis*; Gray, his *Elegy*; Milton, his *Paradise Lost*. God's masterpiece is this plan of salvation. Nothing in the past ever equaled it; nothing in the future will do so. There are none who can measure the greatness of this work; it surpasses the grasp of the human mind.

2. It is great because of the power needed to accomplish it. If God had not been omnipotent, he were too weak; if not omniscient, he were not wise enough. God might have been strong enough, and wise enough to create, and yet not able to save. To create, simply required a word. To save required greater power. It required infinite love, combined with infinite wisdom and power, to save. Jesus at the grave had power over death and in the storm he was master of the elements; but Jesus wept over Jerusalem, like an impotent man. He stands and pleads, and you say, "No." Can we not see something more than power is needed?

3. It is a great salvation because founded on a great sacrifice, and sacrifice is grounded in love. Elizabeth Fry went to prison to redeem the abandoned. She was told to lay aside her watch and purse. She replied, "I will show confidence." When Christ came to our prison he brought all the jewels of affection; he was heaven's jewel. Heaven could not afford to spare him, but God spared not his Son, but sent him to rescue us from the prison-house of death.

We read of Leonidas and his Spartans, and call it a great sacrifice; we read of the king of the Locrians, who gave his eye for his son, and admire

his love. Many times soldiers have received blows aimed at a comrade, but whoever heard of a king dying an ignominious death for a rebellious subject.

4. The salvation is great because of the suffering it involved. It is a fortunate thing that we can not see our trials. We think we would like to see the future, but it is well we can not. Suppose that man, who last week lost his property, or wife, had known it for ten years, would it not have been a keen, growing anguish? Christ foreknew his sufferings; he was dying, in a sense, continually. The last horror hung over him wherever he went; on the mountain, in the village, in the city, at the seaside, it was present. He spoke of it, contemplated it, but marched straight to it. When he went into court he knew the verdict beforehand. When his hour came, what a life it had been; trouble all the way. He was poor, cast out and betrayed. Nature shudders; the sun veils its face; earth trembles; God turns his face. Hark! what will the sufferer say? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

5. The salvation is great in that which it proposes to do for man. Do you want heaven? It offers that, and a great deal more. Do you say, what can be better? What is better than a feast? Capacity or appetite to enjoy it. Capacity to enjoy heaven is better than heaven. This salvation proposes both heaven and capacity, and the latter is more important than the former, for without it heaven itself would be hell. We can not get to heaven by simply having our location changed from a place called earth to a place called heaven. What we need, first of all, is capacity to enjoy the things

that heaven can give, and this is one great purpose of the church. You love sin; it proposes to take that away. You practice sin; it proposes to change that. You have the guilt of sin; it proposes to remove that. Pick out the sins you want forgiven; write them down; but why should you? God says, not one, but all. "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them white as wool." We may well be thankful that God offers pardon, and not justice; we are saved by grace. A French girl once appeared before Napoleon and asked pardon for her father. Napoleon said, "I can do nothing; he has twice been guilty of treason." "Alas," she exclaimed, "I know it; it is not justice I want, but pardon." Napoleon thought for a moment and then granted it. This is our hope, "not by works of righteousness, but according to his mercy."

There is, however, a necessary spirit we must not overlook. We can best understand it by an illustration. A German prince once visited the arsenal at Toulon, where the galleys were kept. The officer in command offered to release any prisoner in deference to his rank. He went around asking questions, but all complained of injustice and wrong. Finally he came to one who said, "I have been very bad; I do not suffer more than I deserve." The prince said, "Release him; he is the one I will favor." So God wants us to come to him; an humble, contrite spirit is, in the sight of God, of highest price.

6. This salvation is great because of its final deliverance. Imagine a man delivered from serving a term of ten years in the penitentiary, by a governor's pardon. I once heard a life sentence passed on a

man. He turned ashen and trembled like the aspen leaf, and yet it involved, at the most, but a few years of imprisonment.

Methinks some one says, "Sentence has not yet been passed." This is a great mistake; sentence is already passed; the sinner is condemned. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." This implies that those not in Christ are condemned. "He that believeth not is condemned already." What each one needs is commutation of sentence. Jesus offers to do this. "He that hath the Son hath life." "I am come that you might have life." "In my Father's house are many mansions." Are these not motives enough? Liberty, commutation of sentence, mansions of glory; what more can you ask?

A private soldier, William Scott, of Company K, Third Artillery, Vermont, was sentenced to be shot for sleeping at his post. The case reached President Lincoln's ears, and he determined to save him. Afterward he thought, "Suppose the pardon does not reach him in time." Burdened with this thought, he went to much trouble to deliver it in person. Soon after the Third Vermont charged the rifle pits of the enemy and William Scott fell, pierced by six bullets. On his heart was found the picture of President Lincoln wrapped up with his pardon.

God did not send an angel to proclaim pardon, but sent his Son. He came to release us, but in order to do it, he had to take our place and die in our stead. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Somewhere I have read, in substance, the following appeal: Everything in nature will plead against

you; the water you drink will rise as a witness and say, "I told you of the living water that would forever quench the thirst of the soul." The bread you have eaten will rise as a witness and say, "I told you of the living bread that would eternally satisfy the hunger of the soul." The rocks will rise as a witness and say, "We told you of the mighty rock of shelter that would screen you from all the storms of time." The house will rise as a witness and say, "I told you of the heavenly mansions prepared for the faithful." The sun will say, "I told you of light celestial that beams from the throne of God." The stars will say, "I told you of a brighter star, the star of Bethlehem, that would never set." The Bible will say, "I called you by a thousand invitations, but he refused them all." Angels will say, "We flew to you on errands of love, but he neglected our ministrations." Lost souls will say, "You rejected the same as we; my portion should be yours."

Some one has said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions; these were not kept. The road to heaven is paved with good intentions kept. Will you not put your resolutions into practice now? for "now is the accepted time, and to-day is the day of salvation."

## CHAPTER XV.

### **The Speech of the First Christian Martyr.**

Acts 7: Read the whole chapter.\*

This chapter records the speech of Stephen when he stood before his persecutors, about to give his life in attestation of his faith in the hated Nazarene. It is one of the sublimest spectacles presented in all history, and withal it is one of the saddest; to see a brave man die for his convictions is an inspiring sight, but to see a good man persecuted even unto death, is a cause for deepest sorrow and humiliation. It is a marvelous fact that the world's best men have been most mistreated.

I. In this incident we have an example of unconscious influence received by a great man.

1. The speech here recorded is evidently not a verbatim report. If so, it certainly must be a striking example of verbal inspiration. It was probably reported by Paul to Luke. Saul, we are told, held the clothes of those that stoned Stephen. He was evidently greatly impressed by the speech. He seems to have made it a model of his own great speeches delivered many years afterward. Saul perhaps little realized at the time the effect the speech was having upon him, but an impression was made that lingered and produced fruit long afterwards. Stephen, perhaps, did not realize the effect his speech was having. He did not know he was giving a

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\*Read Parker's *Apostolic Life*, on this chapter, to which I am much indebted.



model for some of the greatest speeches that would ever be delivered. Yet such was the case. This is a wonderfully suggestive fact; words are immortal. Will Carleton says:

"A word unspoken may fall back dead,  
But God himself can't kill it when once 'tis said."

This is a startling thought. If the influence of words is so great, then careless speech is inexcusable. Truth, alone, should be spoken, and that with discrimination. We should always be careful to speak our best words, for, perchance, they will never die.

2. This speech shows the illuminating power of history. It is as peculiar as it is wonderful. Such a speech would naturally greatly impress Saul. Stephen traces a line of history with which his audience was familiar. He begins with the call of Abraham and traces briefly the history of God's dealings with the patriarchs. He relates the history of Joseph, the history of Moses, the bondage and the deliverance, the giving of the law, the rebellion of the Israelites, their lapses into idolatry, the building of the temple by Solomon. Having drawn a picture of God's providences over Israel and their rebellion against God, he leaps to the present and charges his hearers with possessing the same stiff-necked and rebellious disposition and persecuting spirit. He closes with this vigorous and fierce denunciation: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of

the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." The effect was what might have been expected. They gnashed on him with their teeth, but he, looking up into heaven, said, "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Then they stopped their ears and cast him out of the city and stoned him.

3. The unconscious influence of this speech suggests the marvelous ways of Providence. God chose the bitterest persecutor of them all to be one of the apostles of the persecuted religion. Saul consented unto his death, but he never got away from the speech. The very style of the speaker was burned into his soul.

In the study of this speech we may gather:

## II. The characteristics of a true and great preacher.

1. Stephen was wholly under the influence of the sacred Scriptures. His speech was full of the Bible. Its great historical facts and their lessons, bearing on the people present, so deeply impressed him that he well-nigh forgot to make any defense. He had read the Bible and believed it, and it got a wonderful hold upon him. This is a peculiarity of the Bible; it seems to be very difficult for any one to read the Bible without prejudice, and with pure motive and honest intent, and disbelieve it. As a rule, men who abuse the Bible have never read it in any true sense. They have read it through colored glasses; prejudice, self-interest, evil desires have hindered. This also explains why some preachers make so little use of the Bible. It is because they do not know it; they have never studied it. This is why some congregations demand everything

from the pulpit but the gospel; they are not acquainted with the Bible. When the church knows the Bible it will be a sorry experiment for the preacher to introduce lectures on science, literature and philosophy, and a hundred other extraneous things. People who have listened to the eloquence of Moses and the prophets and the evangelists of Christ, will not listen to the feeble words of preachers who are strangers to this wonderful music that pulsates in the Word of God. I will not listen to any man abuse the Bible who has not read it honestly, carefully, thoroughly, as much as is demanded of him who aspires to teach botany, chemistry or astronomy.

Think of a man who has never read the Bible, except, perhaps, in the most careless manner, presuming to criticize it! What a sorry spectacle such a performance presents. It is the unblushing presumption of disgraceful ignorance. Mr. Ingersoll boasted that he had read the Bible through. Think of that! One reading as a basis for the knowledge that would justify criticism. If he had read it ten times, carefully and prayerfully, the chances are that he would never have lifted his voice against it. I know of some who have read the New Testament every month for years, and who read the Old Testament several times a year, and their faith has grown stronger continually. They read it enough to catch its spirit; they discover its harmonies and its gracious purpose. Let such men criticize and I will listen.

2. He was a man who took a broad and comprehensive view of life. He not only knew history, but realized his own relations to it. He lived in the past as well as the present. He belonged to a noble

succession; he was a link in a great chain. It is a great inspiration for present duty to realize the history that lies behind. A man can not be truly great who feels he is an isolated unit. He must take his place in the line, and feel that he is a calculated part of God's great plan.

3. He was a man that acted from deep conviction. A man who acts from conviction is always a factor to be reckoned with. The reason why men do not act and speak is because they have no convictions. A man can not prepare himself for the ministry by acquiring a knowledge of literature and facts. He must have convictions. Then, and then only, will he present truth in a pointed and convincing way. In such a man's hands the gospel will be a sword that cuts; a dart that pierces; a fire that burns. Such a man gives to the truth its personal application regardless of consequences. He will speak, even if he die, as Stephen did.

We may learn also from this speech and incident:

### **III. The method of divine providence and gather some practical lessons.**

1. This speech shows that God reveals his truth to individuals. He appeared to Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Solomon. He picks out one man and speaks to him. He calls the one man out from the multitude. He deals primarily with the individual, not the masses. You may object to this and criticize it, but you can not deny it, even if you look outside of the Bible. How is it that one man happens to be a poet, another an inventor? Why does one boy in the family have more sense than all the rest? Why happens it that one man speaks the unconscious thought of a generation? How do I reconcile this

with the idea of God's justice? Only on the ground that the one is chosen for the sake of all.

2. It follows from this that we should always place ourselves in an individual relation to things. When I listen to a sermon I must isolate myself. It must be a message to me. When I undertake a work I must do it as an individual. I must put my own personality into it. When a man makes a speech he should do it differently from any other person, and he will, unless he is artificial. It is individuality that gives power. If God had intended every man to do everything, and all men to do everything alike, he would have made all men exactly alike. He would have given all the same power; he would have left out the factor we call individual peculiarity.

3. This speech shows that the great future demands the sacrifice of the small present. Abraham must leave home and kindred; Joseph must go out among strangers; Moses must surrender court life. So it has ever been. We say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;" there was never a greater fallacy. That idea has ruined many a man. We must give up reality for a dream. We act on this principle all along the line of life. It is thus we get education, professional knowledge, property. This takes the commonplace out of life and fills it with surprises. It is the idealist, the dreamer, that grasps the largest reality; this is the paradox of life.

4. This speech shows that misfortunes have their ministry to perform. We may say, when God calls men will he not go before them and make the path smooth; will he not brighten the pathway of his elect with sunshine and flowers? There was never a

greater mistake. Abraham was called, yet he had to dwell in a strange land, and his seed had to be in bondage. Joseph was called, yet he had to be sold and go to prison. Break in on these lives at some intermediate point, and they appear to be God-forsaken. Moses was called, yet he had to flee for his life; Paul was called, yet he had to be stoned and imprisoned. Our trouble is, we pass judgment too soon. Let us wait until the whole circle of Providence comes into view and then tell what we see.

Father, how are you trying to raise your boy? You have elected him for a great work, a noble profession. Are you going before him, taking all the stones out of his path? You will defeat your own purpose. Let the stoning and prison experience come into his life; let hardship be his portion. This is what God does with his elect. This is the road to great achievement.

In this chapter we learn:

#### **IV. The opposite effects of truth.**

1. It is characteristic of truth that on different occasions it produces opposite effects, and sometimes on different parts of the same crowd. When Peter preached, "they were pricked in their hearts." When Stephen preached the same truth, "they gnashed on him with their teeth." One man goes from the church, humbled, penitent; another goes out angry and rebellious. The gospel is the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. This suggests a startling reflection; no man is the same after the sermon as before. He is better or worse. No man is the same after reading a book as before; no man is the same after conversing with a friend as before. The sun

that causes one tree to grow, causes another to wither.

2. This suggests the question: Why this strange and startling phenomenon? The reason is not hard to find. It lies in us, not in the truth. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." If we are not fed let us not blame God; let us not always blame the preacher. Perhaps we are not hungry. We may have intellectual or spiritual dyspepsia and the food does not agree with us. Oftentimes men are sick, that is why the food does not taste good. Let a man go to the house of God with preoccupied or prejudiced mind, and the whole service, preaching and singing and praying, serves only to annoy and vex him. The truth, to him, is the savor of death unto death. Even Christ could not overcome the prejudice of some men. They said he had a devil.

In the last place:

**V. We see some common mistakes refuted.**

1. We are apt to think that character will save a man from bodily harm. We would like to believe this, but it is far from the case in the world in which we live. In a perfect condition of society this would be true; but in this sin-cursed world, the opposite is true. There is no greater offense to some men than for you to do right. Stephen's character did not save him. Bad men can not tolerate good men. Do not expect it; do not give up because you are persecuted.

2. We argue, also, that regularly constituted authorities are right. Who was Stephen that he should stand up before this highly respectable and regularly constituted court? Surely he must be wrong and



the court right. Can the judge go astray? It is, however, a strange fact that truth in the beginning usually has been with the solitary man. This is the curious spectacle presented all along the line of history, both in and out of the Bible. Regularly constituted authority has often and generally been the bulwark of error and wrong. This does not mean a thing is wrong because authority is behind it, but it does mean it is not necessarily right on that account.

3. We also are prone to think that personal, bodily deliverance is the only deliverance. Can there be any deliverance when life is extinguished? What would we naturally say is the only way for God to deliver Stephen? Evidently by lifting him out from among his enemies bodily. God, indeed, lifted him from among his enemies, but it was by a process we would never have dreamed of. When the stones were being cast at him, he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He lifted him from among his enemies by giving him a soul big enough to regard his enemies as the object of his deepest solicitude. You say, let us pray for Stephen. No, says Stephen, let us pray for these men. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Stephen's persecutors are the ones to be pitied.

4. We are apt to think that life is limited by the eye of flesh. If this were true it had been a hard case for Stephen. Ah, friend, if there is no vision but that given by these physical eyes, who could face the future without trembling? Moses had a hard time, but he endured, seeing Him who is invisible. Paul said, "I look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen." Stephen looked not at the malicious faces of his

persecutors and his bruised, bleeding flesh, but he looked upward and said, "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Jesus is usually represented as sitting, but here, as standing. It would seem that he can not sit unmoved while his servant suffers. The true life is not revealed by the physical eye, but by the inner eye, that lays hold of the eternal verities. It is said that Christ "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross—despising the shame, and hath sat down on the right hand of the throne of God."

Which type of character has the greater charm for you, Stephen's or that of his enemies? Which vision do you prefer, the vision that shall cease when your eyelids close in death, or the vision that endures forevermore?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Prodigal Son.\*

#### The Journey Away from Home.

Luke 15:11-16: "And he said, A certain man had two sons; And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."

The greatest miracle connected with the life of Christ is his teaching. It is the growing wonder with thoughtful men. Teaching that is never inadequate, that never needs revision, and that is so expansive as to be always in advance of the most progressive thought of the age is the wonder of the world.

The parables of Christ adorn this teaching like the costly jewels the robe of the queen. The parable of the prodigal son is the richest of all, and shines with the brightest luster. It is like the diamond that flashes and scintillates as the light falls upon it, throwing back the rays in a thousand directions.

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\*Parker's People's Bible, Vol. on Mark and Luke, Chap. XV.; suggestive of some lines of thought in this and the following sermon.

In this parable there are four principal characters presented to our view, viz.: the father, the younger son, the citizen of the far country, and the elder son.

The younger son first demands attention. In studying his character and conduct, we may well be impressed with the truth that:

**I. He was a thinker, as is shown by the fact that he acted with deliberation.**

He took a course that was the result of careful, though mistaken, choice. It was not a sudden and ungovernable freak that seized him and led him to break up his home relations, but a cool, deliberate action.

It is a good thing to think. As a rule, a man is much safer who thinks; but it does not follow that a man who thinks will necessarily think right. This is, however, the important thing; to think right is the supreme necessity.

1. Notice what the young man might have thought, that he did not think. The negative view is often helpful to a better understanding of the positive side. He might have said, "Father, I am tired of doing nothing;" for that he hitherto had been idle was doubtless the fact. He, like many another son of the rich, had never had anything useful to do. The man who never has an impulse to do anything useful is to be greatly pitied, and this, alas! is the case with many. He might have said, "Father, life is a time for discipline, and this can only come from intelligently directed activity." No amount of favorable circumstance can ever take the place of discipline; the man who escapes discipline misses a most important thing in life. He might have said, "Father, life is a place for service to

others; I want to fit myself for this duty; I want to make the world better by reason of my presence in it." That kind of thinking would have been splendid, but, alas! such thoughts seem to have been absent from his mind.

2. Notice what the young man did think, that he ought not to have thought. He imagined he owned the goods that somebody else had accumulated: "Give me my goods;" this simply meant, let me spend what others have made. Let me have a good time. It never occurred to him that he had no real claim to the goods, neither did he recognize the fact that his father had any claim on him. The very expectations of father and mother were unpleasant to him. He disregarded all filial duty. While possessed of the highest kind of freedom he thought he was not free. He was a son and not a servant, but he did not recognize the great privileges of sonship. With him, as with many, there was no liberty without license. He failed to grasp the fact that liberty to debauch and dissipate is not true liberty at all.

**II. Notice the freedom granted him by the father; he seems to have interposed no objection; on the contrary, he at once complied with the son's request.**

1. How could he have done otherwise? No father can compel obedience in any true sense. Obedience that is not willing is a slavery, hence the father used no compulsion. Doubtless he had instructed and warned him in a thousand ways, but all had gone for nought; now only one thing was left; namely, to let him have his way.

2. Keep in mind that this father represents God. He was wealthy and distributed liberally to his son;

so has God done. What a rich patrimony he gives to every child of his; talent, time, opportunity, are freely given. He does not say, I will wait and see how he will use it, but he gives to each one a full portion in the start. He wants us to use it wisely, but will not compel right use. He will teach us how to use it, by precept and example, but he will not force us to a right line of action.

3. The freedom granted by God to man is an impressive commentary upon his dignity and importance. God treats man as if he were a great being, which is doubtless true when he is potentially considered. Man as God sees him is a wonderful being. Oh, that man could see himself as God sees him! Oh, that man would realize that in the liberty God bestows upon him he has kingly honor conferred upon him! Many would set a far higher value on life if they really knew themselves. The liberty conferred on men also teaches the doctrine of individual responsibility in a powerful way. If I am free, then I am responsible for making the most of life.

III. We notice that the mistakes of the young man are very common even in our day.

1. He thought all true blessings were far away. This is a prevailing error. We are very apt to overlook blessings near by. Many a man wastes his life in searching for treasures far away, when great riches are just at hand. Our truest blessings are close to us. So of opportunities for service; they are here and now. No man need travel far to find useful service.

2. He did the very easiest thing that he could possibly have done; he moved along the line of least

resistance. "He wasted his substance." I do not know of an easier thing than that. He wasted his property, strength, opportunity, the things inherited, and these are the things easiest wasted. A man who inherits poverty and acquires riches will not waste it; a person who inherits a weak body and acquires strength will not throw it away. The man who first learns how to accumulate, will know best how to save.

3. He helped bring on a famine. The men who produce nothing, always help to bring on a famine. Idle, non-producing people are a standing menace; they are sinning against the divine order. A man who is always consuming and not producing will finally get to the bottom; such reap the reward of their own sowing, but, unfortunately, they involve others in disaster also.

4. He did not put his possessions in a safe place. "When he had spent all." It is a pity for a man to have nothing but that which can be spent; such a one, at best, is very poor, and what he has is very unsafe. There is only one safe bank, and that is the soul; he who puts his accumulations in the soul, makes the only safe investment. Paul says it is "incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away." Everything outside of the man can easily be spent. God has put us in this world to accumulate something that we can not spend.

**IV. A new experience, as a natural consequence, came to the young man.**

1. "He began to be in want." This was new, the more is the pity. Want is a good thing if it comes at the right place. Want must come into every life in some form. It ought to come in the



beginning, then the want may be gratified. You want a future; if you are young, you can have it. You want an education; are you young? You can have it. You want the love and respect of men; are you young? Then they may be yours. Any legitimate want may be met and satisfied if it come at the right time. How sad it is to have the want come after a man has spent all; after time and opportunity are gone. What bitterness it puts into the cup of life to want when one has spent all. This young man had spent all, and yet he had not spent all; here was his hope. He still had desire, aspiration, opportunity, yea, even time, and in this fact lay his salvation.

2. When he went into the far country he found a new kind of master; one who paid no respect to past conditions; pedigree had no influence with this employer; it mattered not that he was the son of a rich father. The practical, worldly man pays scanty respect to ancestry or previous condition. He did not seek to give employment congenial to the taste of his employee. He was a practical man; he needed to have a certain thing done, and it was merely a question of giving the young man work that needed to be done. For another reason we should not blame him for sending the young man to feed swine. Perhaps the young man was fitted for this and for nothing better. This is a very practical world. It will use men where they can serve to the best advantage. This teaches us a great lesson. We must fit ourselves for great work if we expect great work. If we fit ourselves to feed swine that will be our employment and it is right that it should be so.

He paid according to the work; the wages were very small for swine-feeding; nothing but board,

and that very poor. He must eat what was left after the swine had finished.

This very practical man represents Satan; he never pays good wages. His rewards may seem attractive in the beginning, but they are very deceptive. Satan takes all and gives nothing in return, just as this very practical man in the far country did.

3. He took a long journey; he went into a distant country. He did not begin to feed swine the next day after he started. He carried much goods with him: money, good impulses, self-respect, native ability, but when he had spent all, he began to be in want. It was a long, sad journey; it was, indeed, a far country into which he had gone.

This story is very true to life. We have seen it acted out, many times, before our eyes. The young who have never learned to work, but only know how to spend, will sometime feed with the swine. Young men who turn up their noses at those who labor, will sometime eat what the laborer leaves. To this point, every one who leaves the Father's house will come, sooner or later, unless he retraces his steps.

Why should any delay the return until the hour of shame and humiliation? until all is wasted? If you wish to be rich, do not waste the patrimony that you have; if you wish to be strong, do not waste the health you have; if you wish to be wise, do not waste the time you have; if you wish to be good, do not waste the noble impulses you have; if you wish to succeed, do not trade off a certainty for an uncertainty. Seize the present moment. Do not procrastinate when all is at stake.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Prodigal Son.

#### The Homeward Journey.

Luke 15:17-32: "But when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger; I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. But he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

We noticed, in the closing part of the previous chapter, the dire straits into which the young man's course of life had led him. Every man should consider carefully the destination to which his path leads. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The parable also shows that want may continue after the means of supplying it are gone, which should give us pause. Every man ought to see to it that he will always have the means of satisfying want, because there is a course of life that leads ever to that which will satisfy the soul's hunger, while, on the other hand, there is a path that leads to famine; to a land where hunger and thirst are never satisfied. Christ's parable of Dives and Lazarus forcibly presents this truth; with these reflections I pass next to notice:

### I. The young man's happy return.

A study of the case shows that the young man did four things that are characteristic of every man who makes an upward journey.

1. He made a great discovery—he discovered himself. "And when he came to himself;" that is one of the greatest discoveries a man ever makes, and many men die and never make it. Some men live threescore and ten years in this tenement of clay, called the body, and never form their own acquaintance.

As a matter of fact, all sin may be regarded as a sort of insanity. The man is not himself. It seems strange that this young man should have gone away from home, but here is the explanation: he did not know himself; he mistook himself for an animal.

He tried to satisfy himself with physical delights and excesses such as home did not furnish.

God sometimes sends strange messengers after men to bring them back. Hunger, thirst, sickness, death of friends. These messengers waked the young man up. He came to himself; he made a great discovery. This is always a blessing, no matter how it is brought about.

2. He made good resolutions. No man is hopelessly lost who can make a good resolution. Down at the bottom of every ladder upon which you mount upward, is the stone of good resolution.

Some people are afraid to sign a pledge. What is a pledge but a good resolution expressed? The pledge may hold a man an hour and he may, by that time, have gained strength for another hour. Do not be afraid to pledge yourself to good things.

3. He made the necessary surrender. He surrendered his pride. He did not say, I will die before I will go back, but, "I will arise and go to my father." A noble thing to do. Many a man is lost by his pride. He does a wrong thing, and is too proud to make it right. He starts on a wrong course, and is too proud to retrace his steps.

This young man was ashamed of his sin. He abhorred his conduct; he said, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Here was true humility, which is a necessary condition of exaltation. Here, also, was self-renunciation: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." There was no self-justification; no attempt to drive a bargain. He felt that the lowest place was good enough for him.

4. He put his resolutions into practice; he made

the journey home. He put forth effort. A man can drift away from God, but he can not drift back again. He must act.

Some ask, "Can I not be saved without taking certain steps?" "I do not see the need of baptism." "Does not God know my heart?" Yes, but you do not know yourself until you act. A man who hesitates at anything God requires lacks loyalty.

## II. The elder brother's reception.

1. I think the elder brother must have considered himself as the elect son. He looked upon his brother as a reprobate. He thought there was no hope for him, and he had no regret. In his case there was great outward propriety, but inward deformity. His external life was correct. He had rendered service. "Lo, these many years I have served thee." There was no transgression; "neither have I transgressed." He had asked, "What are the commands, both positive and negative?" and, having done them, he stopped. This can never result in great development. What a little, narrow soul he was; his inward principles were wrong. He was self-righteous, selfish, lacking in brotherly love; in short, wanting in the true principles of manhood.

2. While professedly acknowledging his relations to his father, he denied the relations coming out of this. The servant said "brother," and he was right. Common fatherhood is the basis of real brotherhood. This man ignored the relationship. He felt no joy; how could he when he had no love? He said "thy son," and not, "my brother."

3. He could make a plausible argument. If you want to find fault, you can do it. Some people never see anything that is just right; they would find fault

with the New Jerusalem if they were permitted to enter. Some find fault with God; he does not do things to suit them. They imagine they could surpass him in the management of the universe if they had a chance. They can't run themselves without falling into the ditch, but they can criticize God. Do not expect the faultfinder to ever go into a love feast; "he would not go in." It is, perhaps, a good thing; if he had gone in he would soon have made trouble. That is one difficulty with the church to-day, the faultfinder is on the inside.

### III. The father's glad reception.

1. It was very prompt. The young man had fixed up his speech, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." When a young man can do that, he is saved. "Father." Oh, the meaning of the word. Poor, broken-hearted father. Only one thing like it and that is "mother," and these two beings God has united in the home and made them the heritage of every child. God pity the child that does not know father or mother.

The father was watching; "and when he was yet a great way off," he saw him and ran to meet him.

Young people, there are two persons who will never take their eyes off of you until their eyes are closed in death, and they are father and mother.

Notice the success of the young man's speech. He began it and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The father broke right in on the speech and stopped it. That represents the anxiety of God to forgive. He will not keep you agonizing for days, or even hours.

2. He was cordial and generous. "He fell on



his neck and kissed him," and said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Nothing half-hearted or niggardly about the reception that God gives to the returning wanderer.

3. This love of the father's expressed itself in service. "My son;" this was followed by service. God can act thus, but we, oftentimes, fail. It takes the service to bring us to a sense of relationship. John B. Gough told of a case he knew. A husband had acted so badly that he could no longer be kept at home. Again and again he had been taken back, and only, each time, to bring ruin, misery and shame. At last all hope was gone, and for years the man was not allowed to enter the house. Finally, in old age, he thought he would try once more. He found his way to his wife, but she would not speak to him. To the friends present she recited the story of her wrongs, and all said, "She is right; she can not receive him." The old man rose to go, and with his palsied, trembling hand tried to put his muffler around his neck, but could not; he tried again and failed; his wife put forth her hand to direct his trembling movement, but that touch was sufficient; it brought her to herself, and she fell on his neck and kissed him. It is in service we are brought to realize our true relationship to God and man.

4. There was a great, overflowing joy. Joy is, necessarily, social in its nature. You can not shut it up. Men who are happy will laugh, and they want others to laugh.

There was foundation for the joy. "For this, my son, was dead and is alive again." There is more than

one kind of death; one kind of death has a joy in it. You plant a seed; it dies. You never see it again, but out of it springs a beautiful seed. Some people, when they are buried, are only planted. So Paul taught. A more beautiful body will come out of the planting. This is not death. Well may we sing by the side of such a grave: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

There is another kind of death; this father knew what it was. His son was dead. Had he gone into the ground, then there would have been no hope. Well might he rejoice. His son had been resurrected from a death more terrible than the death of the body, therefore he said to his elder son: "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this, thy brother, was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### **The Appeal of the Bible to the Young.**

TEXTS.—Eccl. 12: 1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Psa. 144: 11, 12: "Rescue and deliver me out of the hand of aliens, whose mouth speaketh deceit and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. When our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters are cornerstones hewn after the fashion of a palace."

Prov. 22: 6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it."

1. There is no class of persons of so much importance as the young. Does this seem to be a strong statement, consider the fact that intrinsically they are certainly as important as any other class of people, and potentially they are vastly more so? To them the future of society, the state and the church is committed. If the young of this generation are made what they ought to be, in the next generation the social life will be pure and refined, the intellectual life will be bright and elevated, the political life will be honest and patriotic, and the religious life will be zealous and intelligent. Devotion to the work of God will be characteristic of the age, and the Church of Christ will awake from her lethargy, put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth in all her loveliness.

2. The Bible places great dignity and honor upon the young. Many of its most beautiful exam-

ples of purity, fidelity and heroism were young men. Abel, Joseph, Samuel, David, Daniel, Timothy and Titus stand out prominent and beautiful on the sacred page. No disrespect is cast upon the immaturity and inexperience of youth, but, on the contrary, to the young is given a most honorable place in the sacred volume. Even the Saviour of the world is introduced as an infant, with all the limitations of infancy upon him, and is gradually unfolded, passing through all the stages of childhood, youth and early manhood, until he arrived at the period of maturity, when he came forth from his seclusion and entered on his work.

In this study we will first direct attention to the important fact that:

**I. The Word of God abounds in appeals and warnings to the young.**

1. While the young are greatly honored, they are regarded as standing in imminent peril, as the words at the head of this chapter, and the following texts, show: Prov. 23:26: "My son, give me thy heart, and let thine eyes delight in my ways." Prov. 3:1: "My son, forget not my law, but let thy heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace, will they add to thee." Eccl. 11:9: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Prov. 7: "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the tablet of thine heart." These admonitions are urged as a protec-

tion. The young are regarded as standing in great danger, and obedience to God's commandments is pointed out as the road to safety.

2. Is this peril imaginary, or real? Does our own experience or observation corroborate the Scripture view above expressed? There are strong reasons why the Scriptures make so many appeals to the young, and these reasons are not hard to discover:

(1) The young are governed largely by impulse. The emotions are developed first. Passion is strong and judgment weak. Anything that appeals to appetite or feeling appeals to the young more powerfully than to the old. Hence it is that all man-traps are baited for the young. Let not this fact be lost sight of. The saloons, billiard halls, gambling-dens, houses of prostitution, depend for their patronage, largely, on the young. This is one reason why the young are in peculiar danger.

(2) The young, as a class, are under the dominion of the present. The here and now hold them powerfully under its sway. They are impatient; they want to get to the goal quickly. A day seems long, a year like an eternity. Hence, it comes to pass that the young are more impressed by the life that now is, than by the life that is to come. They will barter eternity for time, and a great future, even in this world, for the pleasure of a fleeting moment. Esau sold great privileges and prerogatives for the gratification of appetite for a brief moment, and in this he gives us an example of what we see the young doing every day. The young will sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. This explains the reason why a large per cent. of young men do not

attend church with any regularity. The enjoyments are not sensuous, and the emoluments are supposed to be largely future, belonging to the life to come. Some years ago the following estimate was sent forth in a circular published by the Young Men's Christian Association:

\*Fifteen per cent. of the young men attend church with some regularity; five per cent. are church members; seventy-five per cent. never attend church at all. The condition revealed by such figures is alarming.

(3) The evil results discoverable show that the apprehension is not without cause. In a certain house of correction of seventeen hundred and seventy-three inmates, eleven hundred and seventy-two are between sixteen and twenty-two years of age. In an Eastern penitentiary, of nineteen hundred inmates, the average age is twenty-four years. These statistics tell a startling story. Go through any penitentiary, and you will be struck by the youthful appearance of the majority of the inmates.

(4) Much of the reading that is done by the young consists of the most trashy kind of literature. Such reading-matter is found too often where we would least expect it, even in Christian homes. In answer to the demand thus created, there is a swelling flood of corrupt literature being placed upon the market.

When churches are empty and saloons and gambling-dens and prisons are full of young men, there is call for an awakening among those who would

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\*"Traps for the Young" furnish these and other valuable statistics. I am also indebted to this source for some suggestions used in this chapter.

save the rising generation from the direst calamity.

**II. From this we may draw the great lesson that the moral character of the young in every age is of the first and highest importance.**

1. The nation that leaves out of the account the wants of its children is sowing the seeds of national decay and death. The highest order of statesmanship begins with the children, and thence it mounts upward through every gradation of rank and station in life. The statesmanship of to-day is largely commercial in character. It concerns itself with what a man may have on his back or with what he may have in his hand, or with the house in which he may dwell, more than with the question of what he is, or may be. These material things are of great importance, but they are not matters of the chiefest importance. Protection is a great economic doctrine, but the protection of the soul or mind, or character, is of more importance than the protection of the things that minister to the bodies of men. If our children were made of pig-iron, they would get much more consideration at the hands of some of our statesmen than they do.

2. "But," some one may say, "does not this nation spend large sums of money in public instruction? Have we not a splendid system of free schools maintained at State expense?" There is reason to fear that we are making a great mistake in the matter of our public education; we are making it purely secular. We have failed in our analysis of the beings we are educating, and consequently have overlooked one important factor. We have physical training for the body, and intellectual training for the mind, and here we stop, regardless of the fact



that the most important part in the child is left entirely unprovided for. If there is one factor in man that is more prominent, more insistent, more importunate in its demands than any other, it is his religious nature. Whatever else he may or may not be, he is always, and everywhere, religious. He is, in some way, or manner, worshiping something. It may be the one true and living God, or it may be the horse he drives, or the farm he tills, but he is worshiping. Anthropological and ethnological researches reveal the universality of the religious instinct; some form of religion is everywhere present. An education that leaves out of the account this factor is one-sided and perverted, and may result in more harm than good. Godless public schools and universities may become instruments more potent for evil than for good. The crusade against the Bible in our public schools is indicative of a dangerous tendency growing out of a grievous mistake, and that is, that education is a purely intellectual and secular matter, having nothing to do with the religious nature.

3. If this be true it follows that the great work of parents and teachers is to educate the young religiously, as well as intellectually and physically. One of the greatest evils of the present day is the carelessness of parents at this point. They think it their chief duty to provide for the physical and intellectual wants of their children. When they send them to school they demand that they shall learn mathematics, language, history, science or commercial branches, to fit them for business pursuits. All this is good and important, but the branches studied are estimated simply at their commercial value; what

are they worth in the market? At what price can they be cashed in at the world's commercial counter? is the great consideration. The child is made to feel that education is simply a device to enhance the value of a day's labor. The nobler intellectual considerations, such as culture, refinement, good taste, mental discipline, to say nothing of the ethical and religious factors, are lost sight of.

4. The place of the Bible school here comes prominently to view. If our public schools were what they ought to be, there would still be a large field for the purely religious school. It would occupy an important place. Even if the Bible were taught for its literature, and for its historic value; yea, even if its great ethical doctrines were adequately set forth in our public schools, yet there would be much that man needs to learn, as a religious being, that could not be consistently and adequately taught there. The intellectual and secular side of an education must, in the nature of the case, hold the chief place in our public school system, hence there must, necessarily, be supplementary instruction of a religious kind. This must be given from the pulpit and in the Lord's Day school. The pulpit has its own peculiar field. It must be, first of all, evangelistic. It is unsuited to the impartation of Bible knowledge in any very comprehensive and systematic way. A school for orderly, systematic Bible instruction is greatly needed, in addition to the pulpit, and parents should see to it that their children are put into such a school at an early age, and kept there during the whole period of parental authority, and then it is to be hoped that the children will have formed such a rational view of the value and im-

portance of Bible instruction, and have formed such a taste for it, that they will continue throughout life in the school.

5. Here I can not refrain from calling attention to great evils under which our Bible schools are suffering to-day:

(1) I mention first the practice of some parents of allowing the whim of the child to decide the question of attendance at the Lord's Day school. We not infrequently hear persons say, "My boy does not like to go to Sunday-school, and I am afraid to compel him for fear he will get a dislike for religious things." No more foolish thing could be said. Is the mere whim of an irresponsible, undeveloped child, who is a mere creature of impulse, to govern in such a case? Does any one act on this principle anywhere else? If so, he ought never to have the raising of a child. When the little four-year-old comes to the table, is it allowed to make a meal on pie and cake and preserves? It much prefers to do so; why does not the parent say, "I am afraid to require him to eat bread and butter, for fear he will get a distaste for solid, substantial food"? The absurdity is manifest in the physical realm; why should any one make a like mistake in the mental sphere?

(2) The next great evil is the lack of example on the part of parents and the older members of the church. Parents will never succeed in keeping their children in the Lord's Day school very long if they do not set the example of going themselves. They may entreat and plead, but John and Mary will drop out about the time they are old enough to begin to get the most good. The impression is

created that the Bible school belongs to little children. Father does not attend; mother does not attend; older brothers and sisters do not attend; evidently it can not be intended for grown-up people, why should I attend? Is not the logic perfectly valid? Christian man or woman, do not imagine you are excused from attending the Bible school because you can find excuses. You can frame a dozen seemingly very valid reasons why you should not attend. You are too tired, or you have not time, or you are too sick, or too nervous, or you have a pressing duty, or a neighbor calls; if excuses are needed, you can find them in any quantity. Better be honest and candid, and tell the truth. Say, "I do not attend the Bible school because I do not want to go; I have no interest in it." However, I would not intimate that there are no valid excuses; no doubt there are some who ought not to go, but these cases are few. The day ought not to be distant when old and young will meet in the Bible school for the common purpose of Bible study and instruction.

(3) Another evil is the bonus paid for recklessness and prodigality. The reckless are lionized; many parents would much prefer their children to be smart than to be good. It never seems to dawn upon some that it is possible to be both smart and good. Piety, with many, is regarded as an indication of mediocrity. Another sad thing is the fact that a wild, reckless, corrupt young man, if he has money, has oftentimes a more ready entrance into the so-called best society, than a young man of correct habits and exemplary character, but without money. Even young ladies sometimes act very foolishly; they

will prefer the society of the young man who is going at a fast pace, to the company of one who is sober, solid and industrious and especially if he is inclined to be religious. There seems to be a sort of romance that gathers around the reckless, that fascinates a certain class of young women, strange to say, and many have indulged themselves in this foolish notion to their sorrow.

The text in the next place leads me:

**III. To point out certain forms of evil which should be avoided by the young, suggested by the text from the Psalm quoted above.**

What David means by aliens may be a matter open to conjecture, but he probably means foreigners, and, hence, idolatrous people. From such he prayed to be delivered. The reason for his fear is clear.

1. The first evil dreaded is the contagion of bad example. Nothing is more to be dreaded. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and I will add that bad associations beget and foster vicious habits. Character is built through the operation of the principle of imitation. This fact shows the importance of right associations, and this is further enhanced by the fact that youth is the most impressionable period. Both good and bad impressions are then most easily made. Whoever yields to these contaminating influences is lost.

2. The second evil suggested is that of deceit. "Whose mouth speaketh deceit." He feared the influence of those who were not genuine and sincere; he wanted people to be what they professed to be, because he knew that insincerity was catching. He feared for the consequences if the young should live

in an atmosphere of deceit. If the young, in selecting their companions, would realize this danger many would be saved.

3. The third evil mentioned is falsehood. "Whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood." This is a very broad term. It applies to words, actions and thoughts. A man who speaks a falsehood is a dangerous character, but no worse than the one who acts a falsehood. Many who would resent the imputation of speaking a lie, will be guilty of acting a falsehood with no compunction of conscience. But perhaps false ideas and notions of life are most of all to be dreaded. David prayed to be delivered from false young people, and so should we. There is no greater evil to be shunned. In this parents are far too negligent in bringing up their children.

**IV. The real good in the young to be desired is also suggested in the same text.**

"When our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters are corner-stones hewn after the fashion of a palace."

1. The first idea suggested in this figure is that of beauty. What is more beautiful than a plant as it expands to drink in the light and heat and rain and dew? What is more beautiful than a tree with its blossoms in spring and its fruit in autumn? This should be emblematic of young life. The young should cultivate beauty of body, of mind, and of heart.

2. The second idea suggested is that of vitality. Growth is characteristic of the plant. The moment a plant ceases to grow it begins to die. So of the soul, intellectually and spiritually. It is grow or decay, advance or recede, go up or go down. This

involves the process of taking and giving, and in turn involves intellectual and spiritual hunger, than which there is nothing more important. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

3. The third idea suggested, is that of strength. "And our daughters are corner-stones hewn after the fashion of a palace." This suggests both support and strength. Strength may be had without polish, but David prayed for both. Woman is not merely an ornament. David did not entertain any such foolish notion. She is a pillar to society. Society is never better than its women. A weak womanhood has always and everywhere meant a weak society.

The processes of growth mentioned above are not arbitrary, but necessary. They are based on the nature of the soul; the more it receives the more it will hold, and the more it gives, the more it has left over. The *Iliad* did not exhaust the mind of Homer, nor "*Paradise Lost*" the mind of Milton, but the giving strengthened the power to give. The fountain of love never runs dry; the supply is never exhausted by using. To pour out is to replenish the supply.

Then there is such a wide sphere for all our powers. Each has something the world needs. The world's sorrow is part of our inheritance. It needs our sympathy, and by paying the debt we owe we enrich ourselves.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### The Faith that Saves.

TEXT.—Mark 16:16 (last clause): "He that believeth not shall be damned."

A more terrible utterance than the one couched in this passage can not well be imagined. This language was uttered by the Great Teacher himself. It is not the opinion of some wise man, but the infallible declaration of Him who "spake as never man spake."

It is the more terrible from the fact that there is no higher tribunal to which a man may appeal his case. To be condemned by a human tribunal is terrible, but not hopeless; a man may appeal to a higher court. If the condemnation stands, it is, at best, only temporary; not so in this case here—the sentence is final and eternal.

**I. Since this is true, to determine how this condemnation may be avoided becomes the most important matter that man is ever called upon to settle.**

1. It is something for which we should be profoundly thankful that there is at least one important point on which there is practically no dispute. All admit that there can be no justification without faith. Whatever else may be necessary, at least, as all agree, faith can not be omitted. All unite in declaring that without faith no one can be saved from sin now or from condemnation hereafter.

2. It is also a source of confidence to know that this view is amply sustained by Scripture. Paul says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus states the negative side very strongly. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

3. It, therefore, becomes the question of questions to determine what a man must believe. We will not discuss in this connection whether a man is saved by faith alone, or by faith plus something else. Some hold one view, some another. It is, first of all, necessary to decide what the something is that it is necessary for us to believe.

4. Note further; it is not what we must believe to belong to some party. To believe certain things would make one a Methodist; to believe certain other things would make one a Presbyterian; and the belief of certain other dogmas would make one an Episcopalian; but the question is, "What must I believe to be justified with God?" If this can be settled, all other questions sink into insignificance.

5. Mark well the vital question involved. It is not what is a good thing for men to believe; it is not what it is better to believe, than to believe something else; it is not what it is respectable or popular to believe; but it is, what must I believe or be damned?

II. Another fact worthy of notice is this: The faith that saves, is, by common consent, different from the faith that makes parties.

1. There is a fearful amount of ignorance in the

world just here. I state an admitted fact when I say, many who belong to church can not tell what they believe, or what their church believes. They have gone into the church, not because they believe the creed, or know what the creed is, but because it is popular or fashionable, or because they want to be good, and think it is the proper thing to join some church. They start out with the idea that there is good and bad in all churches, and that consequently it makes no difference what church one belongs to if the heart is right.

2. Is it not strange that people will allow themselves to be divided up into different fellowships and can not tell the reason why? They know they belong to different churches, but can not tell the difference in churches. The Calvinist does not have fellowship with the Arminian, and vice versa, and yet neither can tell the distinctive doctrines of the other. All this shows that the things that divide are unimportant.

3. Now, I ask, "What are the logical conclusions from these admissions?" Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." It is therefore necessary to believe the gospel. Did you ever hear a Calvinist say, "He that believes not Calvinism shall be damned"? No. Then Calvinism is not the gospel. It may be true, but it is not gospel. The Arminian will not say that he that believeth not Arminianism shall be damned. Then, it follows that Arminianism is not the gospel. It may be true, but it is not necessary to salvation.

Let us make this reasoning more specific. The Presbyterian will say the Methodist can be saved.

He thereby admits that the things that make a man a Presbyterian, as distinguished from a Methodist, are not necessary to salvation. The same logic applies to the Methodists and all sectarian bodies. All admit that a man may be a Christian and not believe the thing that gives to each one its distinctive features. The long and the short of it is that there is no salvation in the things that divide.

3. Do I by this logic unchristianize all the religious bodies? I answer, No; I am glad to recognize Christians in all the denominations of the day, but they are Christians in spite of their denomination-ism, and not by reason of it. They all hold to that which makes men Christians, and are divided by the things that are not essential to Christianity. I hold that divisions are wrong, and I regard it as a great misfortune that Christian people allow themselves to be divided by things that all admit are not essential to salvation. If all would preach those things which the apostles of our Lord declared to be necessary, and insist upon nothing that is not essential to Christianity itself, the union for which Christ prayed would soon be an accomplished fact.

**III. Then the question recurs: "What must a man believe to be saved? What is the essential thing or things?"**

1. That there is only one article in the Christian creed is manifest from John's statement concerning the purpose of his Gospel: "Many other things truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing, ye may have life in his name." Here the thing to be believed is clearly

set forth, and also the result of believing is stated, "that we may have life in his name."

2. I next learn what we are required to believe, by what we are required to confess. Paul says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We confess with the mouth the faith of the heart; what, then, do we confess? Paul says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To believe that God raised him from the dead is to believe he was the Son of God. He was demonstrated to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead." 1 John 4:15. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God shall dwell in him, and he in God." Also in 1 John 5:4, 5: "For whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The confession that Jesus is the Son of God, is called the "good confession," and this formulates the faith or trust that is in the heart.

Once more: 1 Tim. 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession." In the next verse Paul tells of what that was; namely, that which Jesus made before Pilate; and Jesus confessed before Pilate that he was the Son of God.

3. Note that this accords with the confession that God made at the baptism of Christ, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and

also at the transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

4. This also accords with the teaching of Christ, Matt. 16:16, "But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ blessed Peter and declared he would build his church, not on this, as an abstract proposition, but on himself, shown by this proposition to be an adequate foundation.

From all this we conclude that the faith that saves is a personal faith or trust in a person, Jesus of Nazareth, as the Son of God. The church therefore rests on Christ, and not on a proposition or any number of propositions.

**IV. Let us ask, "What are the results of such a faith?"**

1. It makes a man a Christian, no more, no less. All the offices and claims of Christ are thus accepted—Prophet, Priest and King—this meets man's need. We believe him, accept his work, obey his commandments. All human authority in the church is destroyed. Synods, councils, assemblies, that speak authoritatively, are repudiated.

2. It furnishes a practical way of converting the world, and the only way. In no other way can all classes be reached, but in this way a man can be made a Christian in a single hour, as in the beginning. It requires months to indoctrinate men in the multiplied articles of creeds and confessions of faith, but a man may hear the facts, commands and promises of the gospel stated in a single sermon, believe and obey the selfsame hour, and thus be saved.

3. It furnishes a practical ground of Christian union. One may say, I believe in Calvinism. Very

good, but you need not compel another to believe in it, if he can be a Christian without doing so. Let us insist on unity in the thing that saves, and allow liberty elsewhere. Why should we divide the Church of Christ, and thus hinder its progress on things not necessary to salvation.

4. This gives to the preacher his legitimate work. The work of all preachers ought to be the same; namely, to bring men to Christ. They all have the same gospel; the difference is caused by elevating human deductions into articles of faith. If a preacher were to follow the apostolic order, he would simply make Christians, and there he would stop. To make anything else would be an additional work, and, therefore, an unnecessary task. Oh, that all men who profess to be preachers of the cross would be content to do as the apostle Paul did: "Know nothing but Jesus and him crucified."



## CHAPTER XX.

### Life the Price of Life.\*

TEXT.—Matt. 16:21-27: From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from the Lord; this shall not be unto thee.

But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life; or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds.

1. There is a focal point in every great life. There is a point at which all the lines of a given life meet. There is a point to which the previous lines converge, and from which all subsequent lines diverge. There is the real life center that gives meaning and power to the whole life. Every careful student of his own life will be able to identify such

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\*Some thoughts in this chapter have been suggested by Parker's *Inner Life of Christ*, Matt. 16:24-28.

a point in his history. One must stand at this point to properly interpret life. This life center, in its ultimate analysis, is a motive or principle. It is a controlling impulse, and often it is revealed in a single act or event.

2. Calvary was the focal point in Christ's life. This fact is indicated by Old Testament types, which, without Calvary, would be meaningless; by old Testament prophecies, which pointed to it by many and minute specifications; by Christ's conversation with Moses and Elias at the time of the Transfiguration, for they talked together concerning his decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem; by Christ's teachings on other occasions, and particularly on the occasion described above, which was most clear and explicit.

3. Peter suggested a turning away from the cross; he said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." The divine plan was not in his thought; he was ready to oppose it, yet he did this with the best of motives. He felt perfectly competent to advise the Master. This shows that it is not always safe to act on well-meant advice that proceeds from ignorance, no matter howsoever friendly the spirit may be. The qualifications of a true adviser are disinterested friendship and comprehensiveness of view.

4. Christ's reply is wonderful for its wisdom and its far-reaching application, "He that saves his life shall lose it." To turn aside from Calvary might save my life in a small, unimportant sense, but it would also lose my life. To fail in the accomplishment of the end of life is to lose one's life. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole

world and forfeit his life?" This means that to miss the end of being is to forfeit life.

**I. This incident shows that there are two lives possible to every man: one great and important, the other small and unimportant.**

1. There is the outward, material, physical life, with its appetites, passions, lusts and desires; with the ambitions and purposes that are realized in the life bounded by time. It is possible for a man to make this life his actual life to which he gives his thought and effort. It is possible for him to live for the ease and comfort and gratification of the body; for the hopes and ambitions confined to this world, and, alas! this is just what the majority of men are doing.

2. Then, there is the inward life of desires, motives, purposes and aims that are intellectual, moral and spiritual, and the activities growing out of these. The life into which enter the hopes, desires and aspirations that reach out to the infinite and eternal. These are set over the one against the other. Christ says, "He that saves his life shall lose it;" that is, he that saves the outward life shall lose the spiritual. He that saves the temporal shall lose the eternal. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" The man who does not realize and fulfill his intended destiny is an awful failure. There is a prize to be won, a mark to be reached, and an end to be gained. He that fails, loses his life.

**II. In this incident we get a suggestion as to the true nature of profit and loss.**

"What shall a man be profited?" This language teaches that true riches are not material things.

Would not a man have a large profit if he should gain the whole world? This present world, of course, is meant. This is generally regarded as a most valuable thing. The man who secures much of the things of this world is looked upon as an eminently successful man. Christ, in one sentence, reaches the climax of argument. The whole world is vastly more than any one man may ever hope to secure, but Christ says, suppose this were possible, a man might have it all, and "forfeit his life;" that is, really have nothing. A man might have a title to the whole earth, and have all the worldly honor and position that men can bestow, and really be a pauper, a beggar, in the sight of God. There is nothing external to the man that he can lay his hand upon, that is really an asset of value in God's sight. Even this physical life, when set over against the true end or purpose of life, has no value. Better die than miss the true end of being, which is the real life.

2. True riches are soul riches; these always endure. These alone qualify man for the accomplishment of his mission; without these life will be a failure, no matter what it may be in other respects. The true assets of life can not be listed in stocks and bonds, nor told in terms of dollars and cents. On the real ledger of life are listed divine love for God and men, sympathy, purity of heart, largeness of purpose, unselfishness, fidelity to duty, courage to meet and discharge the obligations imposed by God. This is life. Peter said, escape physical death; Christ said to do so would be loss of life; "Get thee behind me, Satan," or adversary; you would cause me to stumble and fall; you would rob

me of my crown. To get the world and miss the end for which I came into the world, would be to lose all. To be a true man is to be rich; to get the world and fail in this, is to be poor, yet, alas! how many trade off the largest possible possessions for less than nothing. Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, is an omnipresent character.

III. The principle here enunciated by Christ is far-reaching in its scope. It applies to every part of life.

1. It applies to a young person when he is called upon to leave home for the first time and go out into the world, which is a crisis-moment for the individual. It constitutes an epoch in life. The old home life is a very blessed thing, but in the nature of the case it can not always endure; it is only for the young man or woman up to a certain time. To hold onto it longer would be to save the small life and lose the larger life; it would be to miss the purpose of life.

2. It applies to a young person who enters school for a course of training. At once he is liable to meet very seductive influences. He will face the temptation to get social enjoyment, for which there is such abundant opportunity. He will meet the temptation to get pleasure, which appeals so strongly to the young. He will meet the temptation to save himself from the grind and wear of routine and drudgery incident to school life; this means that he will be tempted to get through school on the easiest possible lines by choosing easy studies and avoiding all severe tests, and by taking short cuts to the coveted goal; to him the language of Christ ap-

plies, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it."

3. It applies to any man entering upon any form of business or professional life. There is always a temptation to secure ease, and avoid what seems to be unnecessary effort. Hard labor is not a pleasant thing for many. The rugged path to success is shunned; the easy, short road is chosen in preference. In other words, there is a disposition to save the present moment at the risk of the great future. Here Christ's language applies with telling force: "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it."

The man who establishes a home, raises a family and performs his true functions in the world, loses what seems to be a very beautiful life, to do it; and his children must follow in his footsteps. The student, who wins the honors of his class and the high respect of his teachers and fellow-students, loses a very pleasant and attractive life to accomplish the great end. The successful business or professional man who honors himself, his fellowman, and his God, and is a blessing to the world in which he lives, loses a life of ease to do it.

This principle is of constant application. In an important sense, every day must be lost in order to be saved, and this is the reason why there are so many failures in this world; men will not pay the price of true success.

IV. We discover in this language and conduct of Christ some principles necessary to highest success.

1. Christ could face a disagreeable duty without flinching, and make everything stand aside for duty's sake. To do right was everything; the suffering entailed was nothing. Get behind me, Peter, the

cross is the goal; this is my life; the suffering is not to be considered.

2. He knew that he who would have followers must be a leader. He said, "If any man would come after me;" He knew that He must go before. Many men hesitate at this point; they can not go out alone. They lack initiative; they want a precedent. Such men can not be leaders. This does not mean that all can not be useful. Good followers are just as important as good leaders, but to have followers a man must go ahead and say, "Come on!"

3. He did not treat duty as a matter of expediency. He did not say, "Shall I go; ought I to go?" but He said, "I must go." It is never proper to say, "Ought I?" when duty is involved, when duty is clear. "Ought" is a word that indicates doubt as to duty.

4. He did not wait to see who would follow; many are ready to go as soon as the crowd is ready; being assured of the temper of the crowd, they are glad to assume the leadership. Many apparent leaders are, after all, mere followers of the crowd they profess to lead; not so with Christ; "I must go up to Jerusalem," whether anybody else goes or not. This is true heroism. Duty never waits for the crowd.

5. He kept things in their proper relation and in their true perspective. Notice how He rushes things to the climax. After death came resurrection; "Raised again the third day." Never make death the end. If that were true, who could endure? After resurrection came glory; "For the Son of man shall come in his glory." Alas! we want the glory to come first. After glory came kingdom. "There



are some of them that stand here who shall in no wise taste death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." The life that ends in the grave is the life of the brute. God places a golden ladder before every man, the first round of which is death, the second, resurrection, the third, glory, and the fourth, kingdom: for we are told we may reign as kings and priests for ever and ever.

The first part of the picture may not be especially attractive. To see a man walking with a cross on his shoulder, is not a pleasant sight. Look at the picture: Christ walking at the head of the column with a cross on his shoulder, saying, "Follow me." Then come Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and all the others, with crosses, following in order. The procession enlarges: we see, with but little stretch of imagination, Polycarp, and Justin Martyn, and Irenæus, and Hilary, and Wycliffe, and Latimer, and Ridley, and a mighty procession extending down through the ages, all bearing crosses. Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Knox, follow in order, all bearing the cross. As the procession advances and the rear comes to view, we see Wharton, and Josephine South, Carrie Goodrich, and many whom I delight to call my own boys and girls, all bearing crosses, and I feel almost ready to say, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

But this does not complete the picture. By faith we look beyond the mist and storm of time, and the head of the column of cross-bearers approaches the shining gates of the new Jerusalem, and the cry is heard, "Who are there arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" and the answer is heard:

"These are they who have come up through great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These are the cross-bearers that followed their great Leader, but now, thank God, the cross has been dropped, and the crown has been won; this is the end of the procession that went out weeping, but is now returning with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### Leaving the First Love.

TEXT.—Rev. 2:4: "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." This was written to the church at Ephesus.

I look upon these letters to the seven churches in Asia as not only of specific, but of general, application. Seven is a perfect number when used symbolically. It represents perfection or completion. It is a definite part put for the indefinite whole, and it has great prominence in the Book of Revelation.

The number twelve is also a perfect number, but is used with reference to holy and sacred things more explicitly. Seven may symbolically represent either good or bad, and is so used. We have the seven spirits of God spoken of, and we are told that seven devils were cast out of Mary Magdalen. There were more than seven churches in Asia, but seven churches are singled out and made representative, I take it, of the churches at large, of all times and places. The faults and failures and virtues of these churches are representative of the faults, failures and virtues of churches generally. Here any church may read its biography in prophetic outline. Here it may find its diseases and the prescription of the Great Physician. Here it may see its commendable traits and gain the approval of its divine Head. I may also add that the principles involved in these

letters apply not only to church but to individual life. We should, therefore, in our study, search for the great principles involved with a view of practical application.

In studying this passage we are led to consider:

**I. The greatest thing in the world.**

Henry Drummond has, in a most admirable way, set forth what he calls "the greatest thing in the world." This, as he very properly shows, is the great principle of love, but that this may be fully apparent, let us approach it by logical and necessary steps.

1. The greatest thing in the world is man.

(1) I have stood in the midst of great mountains, towering aloft in awe-inspiring grandeur, and they spoke to me a wonderful language. They told me of the omnipotence of God, who laid their granite foundations and piled up the courses of their stupendous masonry, putting to shame the most gigantic human efforts. Then I have said, "How weak a thing is man! how insignificant his attainments!"

(2) I have stood upon the pebbly beach and have looked out upon the boundless deep that throws its mighty arms around the continents and holds them in perpetual embrace, and its voice proclaimed the greatness of Him who holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, and whose whisper stills its tumultuous billows. Then I have said, "How impotent a thing is man!"

(3) I have stood beside the majestic river, on whose bosom floats the commerce of a continent, and its mighty and unceasing current spoke of the eternity of Him who pours out its unending supplies

from his unwasting fullness, and I have said, "How transient a thing is man!"

(4) I have looked out into the boundless fields of space in which countless stars run their ordained courses, and myriads of suns burn in undimmed luster; then I have said, with the Psalmist of old, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

(5) I have looked upon the little babe as it nestled fondly in its mother's bosom, and have contemplated its heavenly origin and heavenly destiny, its kinship to celestial intelligences, and its latent undeveloped powers, and I have said, "What is all material nature, when compared to this tiny being made in the divine image and likeness, and destined to live in growing measure of knowledge and power, after the heavens shall have passed away as a scroll, and the elements shall have melted in fervent heat?" Truly, it has been said, the greatest thing in the world is man. No wonder the Scriptures place upon him an exalted dignity and lift him to the very summit of creation, and make him the center around which all divine movement revolves.

2. But if man is the greatest thing in the world, mind is the greatest thing in man. Here is the divine spark that marks his heavenly kinship and establishes his celestial origin. It is mind that places in his hand the scepter of dominion over the world in which he dwells, and presents to him the telescope of faith through which the treasures of God's vast eternity are revealed as his destined inheritance.

3. But if the greatest thing in the world is man, and the greatest thing in man is mind, the greatest thing in mind is love. Intelligence may tunnel the moun-

tain, navigate rivers and oceans, harness the lightning and make it the docile slave of man; yea, it may number and weigh the very stars of heaven, and determine the laws by which they are governed, but it can not command the love of a single heart; it can not satisfy the yearnings of a single soul; it can not call forth those divine activities that make for man's true progress, and insure the realization of that to which his aspiration points. It is love that ushers man into the true paradise of the soul and permits him to taste of those joys that never cloy, and those pleasures that endure forevermore. It is love that takes the hardness and drudgery out of toil, the slavery out of service, and the bitterness out of every sore experience. It is love that binds hearts together in unselfish fellowship and drives away the demons of distrust and hate and fear. A home lined with the gold of love is earth's most sacred sanctuary, and the nearest approach to heaven itself that mortals here may know. No wonder the Scriptures give to it the highest place. "Little children, love one another." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy might and mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." "Now abideth faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love." Even God himself in his essence is declared to be love.

The Scriptures, however, teach what all experience and observation show, that even:

II. The greatest thing in the world may be perverted.

1. There is a love that is native and spontaneous and pure, and consequently divine, and a love that

is secondary, artificial, unnatural and hence Satanic. This latter sort of love is condemned and branded with the divine disapproval, and, sad to say, it is possible, not only to an individual, but to a church, as the passage read shows. Christ, through the apostle John, says to the church at Ephesus, "I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love."

2. I look upon this utterance as embodying a great principle of wide application, which we do well to study. The principle involved in this language seems to be, that to leave the first, the native, the divine love of the soul, for a secondary, unnatural and artificial love, insures the divine displeasure. This must always be the case when any power or propensity is turned from its natural and divinely intended use to that which is unnatural and unworthy. We sing the beautiful sentiment:

"Love is the golden chain that binds  
Our happy souls above;  
And he's an heir of heaven that finds  
His bosom glow with love."

But let us remember that this is only true of the native, spontaneous, primitive love of the soul. The perverted, abnormal love is also a chain that binds, but, alas! it binds the soul to that which degrades and destroys. If the true love binds the soul to heaven, the perverted love binds the soul to hell. No wonder it incurs the divine displeasure. That this may be more apparent, let us consider:

**III. Some specific examples of the perversion of the greatest thing in the world.**

1. This principle applies to the love of nature,



as distinguished from the purely artificial and unnatural affections. Man's primitive, spontaneous love is for God's great world of nature. He first loves the earth and sky, the fields and plains, the trees and birds, the flowers and purling brooks, the meandering rivers and the heavens studded with the diamonds of God's setting. It is a sad thing when man leaves the love of nature, whose "visible forms" speak to him such a "wondrous language," for the meaner, artificial things of man's creation. The man who gives up the love of nature for the love of the artificial, will soon become unnatural and artificial. The natural spontaneity of the soul will soon be displaced by the shams and conventionalities of false, unreal life. God's great heroes have lived close to the heart of nature. Moses was taken from artificial court life to dwell forty years in the desert of Midian, where he could commune with nature and thus fortify and strengthen this primitive native love of the soul. Paul, immediately after his conversion, was taken down into Arabia, where for three years he dwelt in nature's school, that the influence of the shams and counterfeits of city life might be displaced as he felt the throbbings of nature's great heart, undisturbed by the conventionalities of artificial life. Alexander Campbell lived in close touch with nature. His great thoughts were born amidst the rustling of leaves, the singing of birds and the babbling of brooks. Gladstone's soul never ceased to respond to the voice of nature. In fact, no other voice with him was so enticing. Once, as he walked amidst the trees of the forest, when diplomats sought to gain his attention, he looked into an oak and said, "Do you see that mistletoe?" The voice of nature

was so loud he could hear nothing else. The man who can hear the voice of nature will be able to distinguish the true from the false as no other man can do. I believe a school for the discipline of the young should be located where the student may come into close contact with nature. There may be reasons why a school for specialization should be placed in the heart of a great city, but a school for discipline loses a great part of its value when so located. To all who give up the love of nature for a secondary love, Jesus says, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

2. This principle applies to domestic ties as distinguished from all other interests that claim and hold the affections of men:

Our first earthly love is for father, mother, husband, wife and children, and it is a sad day when the heart allows another love to crowd this love out or force it into a secondary place. A clubroom may have some legitimate place in our social economy, when properly conducted, but when it usurps in the heart of a man the place of home, it is a thing to be deplored. To such a man Christ says, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

The boy may give up the love of father and mother and home, for the love of the saloon and card-table and the society of depraved men, but the anathema of God is upon him. Christ says to him, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

The husband and wife may give up that first pure affection for life's companion for a second and guilty love, but angels will weep and only demons in hell

approve. Jesus says to such, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

A poodle dog may have some use, but when the love of a mother's heart, or the love that is natural and native to the mother heart, is transferred from her offspring to a poodle dog, Jesus says to such an one, "I have somewhat against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

3. This principle applies to the native confidence of the human soul. Man is normally a being of confidence and trust. Children are strikingly trustful. They believe in people naturally. They trust not only father and mother, but usually everybody with whom they come in contact. The instincts of children may cause them to shrink from notoriously bad men, but normally and generally they trust men. All great souls believe in men. When a man says, "I have no faith in men," he is to be pitied. It shows that the native confidence of the soul is lost. To such an one the language of the text applies with peculiar force; "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

4. This principle applies, as in this case, to the church, and hence to spiritual things. Man's supreme love is for God. True, the object or person loved as God, may be unworthy of the soul, but the principle of love for God is native and spontaneous. From this it follows that the first love of a church is for God. This carries with it certain correlatives:

(1) Love of the brethren. Brotherly love is characteristic of a true church, everywhere and always. When brotherly love is lacking the church has left its first love.

(2) Love for God's Word. The Word of God

is to the true church the sweetest of all music. It is more attractive than the most gorgeous temple. Such a church needs no special attraction to draw and hold its membership. When a church has to resort to all manner of seductive devices to secure the attendance of its members at its services, it has taken its place with the church at Ephesus. It has left its first love.

(3) Love for humanity at large. No one can truly love God and not love all his works, and, most of all, God's crowning work, which is man. To a church in possession of its primitive love, the missionary spirit is natural and spontaneous. Its love overleaps all boundaries, disregards all artificial barriers that men have erected. It yearns for all men as a mother yearns for a lost child. This was doubtless the trouble at Ephesus. The members had ceased to love one another as in the beginning: they had grown distrustful and envious. They had lost their love of God's word, and maybe preferred lectures on philosophy and science. They had become proud and vain, and wanted, perhaps, a costly temple with gorgeous appointments. They had become narrow and sectarian, and thought most about themselves and but little of the needs of the regions beyond. They still possessed many good traits; their external morals seem to have been good. They were careful not to be imposed upon by false teachers. They had been able even to suffer persecution with patience, but they had one great fault, they had left their "first love." To them, and all such churches, Jesus says, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first

works, or else I come to thee and will remove thy candlestick out of its place except thou repent."

Are you allowing the first pure love of the soul, which in its supreme manifestations is love to God, to be displaced by a secondary love, a false love, a perverted love, a love of the sins and frivolities and vanities of the world? If so, remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent and thus secure the unqualified approval of the Master.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### **The Intermediate State.\***

Read Luke 16: 19-31.

TEXT.—Heb. 9: 15: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of his death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

The question as to what man's condition is between death and the resurrection, is one of the deepest interest. It is second only in importance to the question of our final condition after the resurrection of the dead and the general judgment. There are some who hold that the soul sleeps in an unconscious state; in other words, that the soul has no conscious existence between the time of death and the time of the resurrection. Again, there are many who believe that the soul has a conscious existence after death, but that it dwells in an intermediate state, pending the resurrection, and the general judgment, after which it enters heaven or hell, as the case may be decided. We consequently hear persons speak of the three states of man: the fleshy, the intermediate, and the eternal.

It is the purpose of this chapter to ascertain, if possible, what reason, and the Bible teach con-

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\*For the general line of thought in this sermon, I am indebted to a sermon of J. B. Briney on this subject which I heard him deliver. As to whether it is in print, I do not know. As to whether or not it is in print I do not know.

cerning an intermediate state. If the soul is kept in an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, and its final dwelling-place is not fixed during this long and indefinite period, there ought to be a reason discoverable. I am less and less inclined to look upon God's dealings with man as arbitrary. If man is kept in this intermediate state, it must be that either the state of the soul or circumstances and conditions demand it. We may rest assured it is not an arbitrary matter on the part of God.

I. First, then, let us ask, "What does reason seem to teach us on this important question?"

1. Since man is the child of God, and God reveals himself to us as a very loving Father, we would naturally conclude that he would go at death immediately into the presence of his Father, unless there are reasons that preclude such a happy consummation. The advocates of an intermediate state build their argument as follows: They tell us that man is finally to be judged for the deeds done in the body; that this judgment is to take place at the end of the present dispensation; that pending this judgment it would be illogical and impossible to admit man into heaven, and that, consequently, he must necessarily be kept in an intermediate state. It will at once be seen that in this view of the case, man's destiny is not fixed at death, or, at least, that it is not known. The soul is consequently kept in uncertainty as to its final fate, living, as it were, in a state of suspense through centuries and millenniums awaiting the final judgment. Can this be possible? Then we may well shrink from death. If we are plunged into this awful uncertainty, and are compelled to remain in



that condition indefinitely, death is certainly something to be dreaded. Such does not seem to have been the idea of Paul when he said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ." "While we are home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" but we are "willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." He then declared to his brethren that he was willing, for their sakes, to forego, for a time, the unspeakable bliss of being associated with the Master whom he served. He also declared that he knew a man, no doubt referring to himself, caught up into the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell. This third heaven was the place where God dwells. It is incidentally taught in this passage that when the soul passes out of the body, it will go into the presence of God. But the question is asked, "Why the necessity of judgment if the question is definitely settled at death, and the souls of the righteous are admitted to the presence of God?" I answer, perhaps our conceptions of the general judgment may be entirely at fault. We get our ideas from our knowledge of our ordinary courts of justice, where the man is tried and the evidence brought to establish his guilt or innocence, and the decision held in abeyance until all the evidence is in. This can scarcely be the idea of the general judgment that the Bible speaks of. The question as to man's condition has certainly been decided long before that time. The general judgment, doubtless, consists of a formal winding up of the affairs of the great remedial system when the work of Christ, so far as man is concerned, will have been accomplished, and Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. Doubtless there will

be a formal announcement of the stupendous results, and the righteous, who are already separated from the wicked, as it seems by the account, will formally be approved and the wicked formally condemned, although each man has doubtless long since learned the fate in store for him. It will also serve to show to men and angels the grounds of God's action. Furthermore, if there be an intermediate state, it does not follow that souls that enter this state are ignorant of their final doom. The parable of Christ concerning Dives and Lazarus shows that immediately upon death Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom, and Dives went to a place of torment. This was before the general judgment, because Dives wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his brethren who were still living on earth; therefore, the parable teaches that a separation takes place immediately after death. Now, whether Dives were in the intermediate state, or whether Lazarus was in heaven and Dives in hell, it matters not, so far as the parable affects the doctrine of the general judgment. The teaching of the parable is that the judgment, so far as determining the destiny of man, is passed at death. Therefore, we may not suppose that the soul remains in ignorance of its final doom during the long period between death and the resurrection. I believe, however, that when Christ delivered the parable, there was an intermediate state for reasons which will appear later.

2. I next call attention to the separation that exists between man and God, and the cause producing separation.

The first view we have of man, as he is pictured to us in the Book of Genesis, is a very beautiful

one. Man and God seem to be living together in the most familiar and loving intercourse. God is represented as coming into the garden and walking with Adam in the cool of the day. There seems to have been no separation between man and God. The reason is not hard to discover. Man was innocent and pure. His soul was unstained by sin, and consequently he was a fit person for the companionship of God. But soon the picture changes; man disobeyed God and fell from his high state, and immediately separation took place. We find man hiding away from God in guilt and fear, and God sending his voice after him saying, "Adam, where art thou?" What caused the separation? The answer is, sin had separated between man and God, and this is the answer that is given throughout God's Word. "Our sins have separated between us and God." This is illustrated in the case of David. At one time he said, "The Lord leads me." And then again he said, "Why standest thou afar off, O my God?" At one time a sense of nearness; at another there was a felt distance. Doubtless the latter feeling was caused by his knowledge of some grievous sin or fault. In our own experience we have a sense of God's nearness at one time, and of being far away from God at another time. Sin causes the feeling of separation. When we are faithful in performance of duty we feel close to God, and when we are remiss, or are consciously guilty of overt acts of sin, God seems to stand afar off. What then is the logical conclusion? Surely this: That whenever sin is taken away, the cause of separation being gone, man will be permitted again to come into the immediate presence of God. But when is the sin taken

completely away? Not so long as we are in the flesh. Our sins have been pardoned, but we have a body whose lusts are sinful, and as long as we inhabit this sinful body we must, in a sense, at least, be separated from God. While through the mediation of Christ we may approach him and commune with him, yet we can not come into his immediate presence with this sinful body, but the soul cleansed by the blood of Christ may come into the presence of its Maker. I consequently hold that the verdict of reason is against the doctrine of an intermediate state at the present time.

II. A study of God's unfolding plan of redemption shows that previous to the establishment of the new institution, an intermediate state was a logical necessity.

1. Immediately upon the introduction of sin into the world, God's purpose to save man from the consequence of his disobedience is revealed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Thence onward until the offering of Christ on Calvary, we have the gradual unfolding of that great purpose. We have the smoking altar and its victim, both under the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations. Four thousand years rolled by while man came, according to the divine appointment, and offered his victim for the sin of his soul. During this entire period the fact of sin is kept prominent, and also the symbolic promise of deliverance is held up. God also embodies his great purpose of deliverance in a promise to Abraham, saying that in him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Twice this promise is repeated, and, in harmony with it, the chosen nation

is brought out of bondage and put into possession of the promised land, and a most wonderful ceremonial law is given which was observed through fifteen hundred years, until the coming of the promised Messiah. But, as yet, no actual pardon had taken place; not a single sin had been forgiven. All the victims slain on patriarchal and Jewish altars had only served to stay the penalty, and point forward to a great sacrifice that was to be made on Calvary. What then, it may be asked, was accomplished by all these wonderful ceremonies, and this long line of slain victims, running through thousands of years? Simply this: the sins of those who offered the victims were laid forward year by year. There was a remembrance made of sin again every year, until finally Christ came and made the offering that was efficacious, of which the animal victims were merely prophetic. Apostolic teaching on this point is very clear. Rom. 3:20: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:24, 25: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Heb. 10:11-18: "And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifice, the which can never take away sins. But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down on the right hand of God: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof

the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Under the old dispensation, sin was remembered again; under the new dispensation, when once taken away by the blood of Christ, it is remembered no more. Heb. 11:32, 39, 40: "And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Barak and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." \* \* \* "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

This invests the death of Christ with a double significance. It looked backward; Christ died for the sins of those who had lived before his time. It also looked forward; he died for those who should live afterward. He was the one sacrifice offered in the midst of the ages for the sins of the world. In all the years that had passed before he came, there was no actual pardon. Now let us ask what is the logical demand in this case. Since sin separates between man and God, the sin not having been actually removed, no one, even at death, could go into the immediate presence of God. There must have been, of necessity, an intermediate state, where the righteous dead might dwell, awaiting the great consummation of the actual taking away of sins by the blood of Christ.



III. We are now prepared to consider in all its wonderful fullness the work of Christ and its results.

1. Christ came to restore fully the broken connection between man and God. We read, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and consequently to give eternal life to as many as shall believe on his name. God had said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Christ is declared to be the promised seed. In him the promise to Abraham is fulfilled. As Christ was approaching the cross he said, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this hour came I into the world." Again, he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass, nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." On the cross he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This passage has a deep and far-reaching meaning. Christ seemed to have a consciousness of a separation between him and God. God, he declared, had forsaken him. Now, as sin is the only thing that can separate between the soul and God, sin must have separated between Christ and God, but Christ had no actual sin, therefore if sin separated it must have been imputed sin, and this fully accords with the inspired teaching. "He bare in his own body our sins upon the tree." When God laid upon him my sin and your sin, the natural consequence took place, which was a separation between Christ and God. But finally we hear him say, "It is finished." Type and prophecy have been fulfilled; he has accom-



plished the great work for which he came. He has made the sin-offering which was to take away the sin of the world. Now, for the first time, the sins of the patriarchs, the sins of the faithful dead, could be actually taken away, and now, for the first time, a full salvation could be preached.

2. This brings to view very fully the perfect work of Christ. For all those who had lived prior to his coming in obedience to the law, he took away sin; for those who will come after he offers a free and full pardon, on plainly expressed terms. Therefore, before ascending to heaven he gave a great commission: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." "Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer that repentance and remission of sin should be preached, in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Note now the apostolic teaching; sin for the first time is actually taken away. Rom. 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 11:26, 27: "And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written. There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall take away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Heb. 12:22, 23: "But ye are come unto mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

This is a very suggestive expression—"spirits of

just men made perfect." Before the death of Christ they had not been made perfect, but now by that offering they had been perfected. But not only was the sin to be actually taken away, but it was to be remembered no more. Heb. 10:16, 17: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws on their heart and upon their mind also will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Under the old dispensation sin was remembered again every year.

3. What are the logical demands in the case in the light of this teaching? Evidently the same conclusion we reached when discussing the question from the standpoint of reason. The cause of the separation being taken away, the effect should also disappear. Nothing can keep a sinless soul from Christ, and as the sin was now actually taken away, the intermediate state was no longer a necessity.

We are told that when Christ arose, the bodies of many of the saints arose and were seen in Jerusalem, and that Christ, as he ascended on high, led captive a multitude of captives. We are now enabled to see who these captives were and why they had been held captives. It is fair to conclude that they were the souls of the righteous in the intermediate state who had been waiting for the perfect redemption of Christ, and when Christ went down into the tomb and burst the bars of death, he unlocked the prison-house of the unseen world, and let the spirits of the righteous dead come forth, and carried them with him in his triumphal ascent to the presence of his Father to take his seat on the mediatorial throne. Does not this explanation throw

some light on a passage in 1 Pet. 3:19? "By which also he [Christ] went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient." May not this passage, which has always been considered mysterious, refer to the wonderful fact of Christ opened the gates of the unseen world and liberated the captives, that they might ascend to the Father, since now their sins had been actually removed. In this view of the case Christ was the preacher that preached to the spirits in person, declaring to them the gospel of final, complete forgiveness through the blood which was shed on Calvary. The Psalmist, looking forward to this wonderful consummation, declares, "Thou hast led captive a multitude of captives." Also in Eph. 4:8, we read: "Wherefore he saith when he ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

4. This enables us to have a much more vivid picture of the scene described by David.

It was a mighty host that approached the gates of heaven when Christ ascended from Olivet. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the mighty prophets of Israel, were in that company, and doubtless passed through the uplifted gates and entered with him into the presence of the Father. They beheld the coronation ceremony when the crown was put upon his brow, and when God declared he should reign until he had put all enemies under his feet. He is reigning still, and when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; then he shall give up the kingdom to God, the Father, that he may be all in all. This view is very consoling.

Some important conclusions follow:

1. It takes away a large part of the terror of death. We are not destined to go into some place of confinement to be shut up for unknown ages, but the moment the soul passes out of the body it goes into the presence of the Lord.

2. It reconciles us to the loss of our loved ones. The loved ones who have gone before are with the Father now. They are with the Son, the great shepherd of the sheep, who leads them by his hand into fountains of living water, and who wipes away the tears from their eyes. John in his wonderful vision saw a great host that no man could number. That host is composed of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And at this moment they are assembled in the presence of God, worshiping him.

3. It prepares us to understand the description of Christ's coming. "Behold," says Jude, "he comes with ten thousand of his saints." We are also told that "those that sleep in Jesus will Christ bring with him." If we pass over the river of death before the coming of Christ, we shall go unto the Father, and we shall be with the grand company coming out of heaven to welcome those who remain on earth at the time of his coming. We will belong to the reception committee.

To me it is a cheering thought that there is no prison-house for the righteous now. If Gabriel should blow his trumpet at this moment, I should expect to look up and see the loved ones coming to receive me.

4. It fills us with joyful anticipation as we approach the river of death. I am not going out

into a strange country where I shall see no familiar face. Although I must say good-bye for a time to the friends here, yet presently I shall strike glad hands with the friends on the other side who are awaiting my coming, and together we shall wait, in joyous expectancy, till the other loved ones follow.

I can do no better than to close with Paul's shout of exultation: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, why is thy victory?"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### Shall We Know Each Other There? \*

Read Rev. 21 or 22.

TEXT.—2 Sam. 12:23: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

1. There is a disposition on the part of some to explain away the teaching pertaining to the spiritual world to such an extent as to destroy its power. God is regarded, not as a person, but as sort of all-pervading essence. Satan's personality is denied. The Spirit of evil is made to mean simply an evil propensity. Heaven is regarded not as a place, but as a mere subjective feeling or state.

The tendency of all this is toward pantheism or atheism. The faith necessary to heroic, self-sacrificing Christian life is destroyed.

2. If language has any meaning, the Bible teaches that heaven is a place, a locality, a fixed habitation. What is the natural conclusion from such Scriptures as the following? Rev. 12:7, 8: "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred, and his angels, and they prevailed not."

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\*The thoughts and arguments entering into this sermon are not new, but they have been gathered from various sources, among which I mention a sermon of the late Dr. Talmage in the "Brooklyn Tabernacle."

neither was their place found any more in heaven." 2 Cor. 12:2: "I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body I know not; or whether out of the body I know not; God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven." Psalm 24: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates—even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and let the King of glory in." This passage from the Psalms is prophetically descriptive of Christ's entrance unto heaven. Christ said, "Our Father which art in heaven;" also, "There is more joy in heaven." Rev. 21:2: "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven." John 14:2, 3: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." These and many other passages point to heaven as a place.

3. Not only does it appear clear that heaven is a place, but equally clear that it is a place of future recognition. This is a question of tremendous and thrilling interest. No question has power to stir the soul more deeply than this. It excites our emotions as nothing else can do. We have friends; we have to leave them; shall we see them again? We have had friends; they are gone; will we ever look into their faces again? Could there be a topic of more absorbing interest? Cold, indeed, must be the heart to which this subject does not appeal. There is no hope that has more power to cheer the soul, and if there is ground for such a faith it behooves us to consider what its foundations are.

I. To my mind there are only two subjective conditions necessary to future recognition: sameness of person and fidelity of memory.



1. First, then, do we remain the same person forever? (1) Unless we do, the doctrine of future reward and punishment can have no meaning. If I am either rewarded or punished, it will be because I remain the same person in the future. If personality is destroyed, or changed, then neither reward nor punishment can follow the individual beyond this life. This means that death ends all, so far as men are individually concerned. An entire change of personality is equivalent to the creation of a new being. The doctrine of future reward or punishment rests on identity of personality. (2) The Scripture teaching that man is to know himself in the future, involves the doctrine of sameness of person. In Luke 23:42, we read: "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Notice also the teaching of Matt. 25:37-40: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" . . . "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Again, Luke 16:27: "Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Underlying all this teaching is the idea that man remains the same person after death as before. Finally, let it be observed that the very word "salvation" implies identity of person. If the individuality changes, there can be no salvation; to save a thing is to preserve it, and not to substitute something in its place.

Then the first condition of future recognition is met; namely, sameness of person.

2. Let us next notice the question of memory: Will memory perdure?

If we do not recognize our friends in heaven, it must be owing to some change in the mind. Should we we remain there as here, no better or no worse, recognition is an assured fact. What are the probabilities? (1) We carry friends in our minds up to death; will some change in death so affect us that we will cease to remember? Memory now owes its lapses to imperfections of body. Often a blow on the head will destroy memory, or perhaps I should say interrupt its functions. Persons having met with accidents that injured the head, have lain for weeks unconscious, and even after apparent recovery, memory was partially gone. Finally by removing a little plug from the skull memory was restored. This shows that memory is dependent on the condition of the body. In the future state we are to have perfect bodies, spiritual bodies, perfectly adapted to the wants of the spirit, hence, no doubt, we will have better memories than while here. We are unable now to comprehend the nature of a spiritual body, nor is it necessary that we should. We may not, however, deny its reality because of its mystery. The idea of spirit is just as mysterious as the idea of a spiritual body as a habitation for the spirit. (2) The fact of a future life implies memory of the present. If anything in this life is to be forgotten, it would be such things as make the least impression. But our friends make the deepest impression; shall we not remember them? To say that we will not remember our friends, is equivalent to saying we will

not remember anything. This would mean that there is no conscious future life, which is practically a denial of the doctrine of immortality. (3) The greatest masters of thought teach that the contents of memory are indestructible. Impressions may disappear, but are not lost. A latent impression may be reproduced by reproducing the proper conditions. Often the mind, excited by disease, calls up old impressions. There are many cases on record of men who had been apparently drowned, who were afterwards resuscitated, whereupon they remembered things long forgotten. This argues that nothing is ever entirely lost from memory.

Since heaven will furnish all the conditions necessary to excite memory, namely, a perfect body and the presence of friends, are we not led to the irresistible conclusion, by identity of person and fidelity of memory, that we will know each other there?

**II. Let us, in the next place, direct our minds more specifically to what the Scriptures teach on this subject.**

1. The language of David when his child died bears on this question.

There is a very sick child in David's house. Disease, which stalks boldly into the hut of poverty, comes no less boldly into the palace. David is distracted with grief; he can neither eat nor sleep. All his surroundings of elegance can not drive the shadow from his heart. Seven days pass, and at last the little sufferer sleeps in death. The attendants come to bear the news, and David hears them whispering and says, "Is the child dead?" "Yes." At once he rouses himself and throws off, in a measure, his grief, to the astonishment of friends. I

ask, what power hushed the tempest in David's soul? What strength lifted up the king? It was the thought that he would come again into possession of the child. No grave-digger could hide him. He exclaimed, "I shall go to him, but he can not return to me." Was David wrong? I think not. God allowed David to pen this thought for our encouragement. Homesick man or woman, you will go to see your friends ere long. But, says one, this does not say David would know his child. Poor consolation, indeed, if this were not true. David expected his child to wait for him and welcome him.

Often I have seen father and mother stand watching for my coming as I have returned to them on an occasional visit. But I shall never see this again in this life. Father and mother have both passed away, but it is cheering to believe that they will watch for my coming on the other shore, and that we shall know each other, and clasp glad hands in a reunion that will know no separation. Call this sentiment, if you will, but no more blessed hope ever enters into the heart of man.

2. The very phraseology used to express death, in the Old Testament, indicated the truth of this doctrine. "Abraham died and was gathered to his people." How many such expressions we have! What people? Does not this mean that Abraham went to his friends and comrades who had gone before? Does this not mean that he was reunited with those who had gone before, in a conscious fellowship?

3. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Christ. The three disciples who were present were enabled to know them,

although they had been dead for ages. As to how they knew them we are not told, but the fact remains that they recognized persons who had once lived on the earth, long after they had passed into the future world. Shall we not then be able to know our friends? Surely this must be so.

4. Christ used this fact to comfort Mary and Martha. Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." "I know he shall rise again in the resurrection," she answered. Christ allowed her to believe this, but what comfort would it have been could she not know him?

5. The Bible teaches that the angels know each other. They have names to distinguish them, which implies recognition. We are to be even higher than angels, and shall not we know one another?

6. Do we know each other here? The Bible says we will know better there. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." We beautifully and truly sing, "We shall know each other better, when the mists have cleared away." We will not be able to hide anything from each other there, then. I can not see how any one can profess to believe the Bible and not believe this doctrine. Did not Dives recognize Lazarus, and did not Father Abraham say, "Remember thou hadst thy good things" in the former life? Parable, one may say, but did the Master teach us a falsehood by the parable? Everywhere the New Testament is full of the doctrine of future recognition.

**III. A few other considerations which go toward establishing this most cheering doctrine are here introduced.**

1. The general belief and expectancy of the

world confirms it. In all lands and all ages this faith is found. It is so universal that I argue it as a divine intuition. Socrates spoke ecstatically of meeting Orpheus and Homer; Cicero spoke of meeting with the great dead, and especially with Cato. Sometimes we are told a servant among the Danes slays himself on the death of a beloved master, in order to serve him beyond. All nationalities have expressed a faith in this idea. Shall we believe that all this points to nothing?

2. But, says one, I do not believe in the resurrection of the body, therefore I can't accept the doctrine of future recognition. The resurrection of the body is a Bible doctrine, but is physical identity the only means of recognition? There are soul features as well as bodily features. But suppose there are mysteries; it will not do to deny resurrection because we do not understand it. What can we understand? We would have to deny the reality of everything we see, because there are mysteries in everything and everywhere around us.

3. Future recognition will be needed to enable us to enjoy heaven to the fullest extent. When do you enjoy a dinner most? When do you enjoy music most? When do you enjoy painting most? Do we not want some one with us with whom to exchange glances and sympathies in order to enjoy? Soul communion seems to be necessary in order to our fullest enjoyment; consequently we will need our friends in heaven to enjoy it to the full.

4. We will need to recognize each other in the other world in order to have an opportunity to pay our debts.

There are a good many debts that dollars and



cents will not pay, even in this world. We all owe more than we think to others, but we will never know all we owe, until the judgment day. Parents often die and leave their children unsaved; afterwards they are brought to Christ by some earnest soul. Poor men and women often die and leave their children unprovided for; some kind heart feeds and clothes them. Will not the parents want to thank them? Have you ever fed a hungry orphan? Have you not felt joy in so doing? Imagine the joy you will feel when in heaven the father will thank you. If there is no future recognition, an opportunity will be lacking for one of the sweetest joys known to man: that of giving expression to gratitude felt for great benefits bestowed.

5. It will require future recognition to take away our embarrassment when we enter heaven. To enter heaven might seem, in one respect, to be a cause for embarrassment; to feel that we had done so little as compared with the great reward bestowed; a sense of self-reproach, a feeling of unworthiness, would seem to be natural under the circumstances. It seems the righteous feel so, judging from the picture given: "When saw we thee hungry and fed thee, or naked and clothed thee?" If we should feel so, how it would relieve us to hear some one say, "You forget that Sunday-school class; I am one of them." "You forget that poor boy that you helped; you forget the sick that you ministered to."

6. The inquiry is suggested: "If we know our friends in heaven, will we not miss some who may not be there?" Doubtless this will be true. Doubtless, too, we will be so completely satisfied with what God has done that our sense of loss will be



swallowed up in our sense of God's goodness and mercy. Explain it all I can not, but I know that all must be well, and we will doubtless understand it all at last and be satisfied.

Sometimes even here families have reunions. They are happy times. How happy father and mother look when the children all come. The old table groans under its load of good things. What songs and stories are indulged in. Soon, however, the good-byes must be said, and the eyes are dimmed with tears. But what joyful weeping there will be when we meet up there to part no more. Imagination fails to picture the bliss of such a meeting. No wonder it is said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the things which God hath prepared for those who love him." Have we loved ones gone before? They are doubtless anxiously waiting for us even now, and thrill with expectation every time the gate swings open. Perhaps they say, "It is about time father or mother or brother or sister or wife or husband or child, were coming." "It may be the next one that comes in will be the dear one." Have you ever stood watching the road for a friend? How your heart leaped when the familiar form came into view. So, doubtless, our friends in heaven will feel when they see us coming. So, doubtless, we will feel when those we may leave behind shall join us in that deathless land.

How my heart aches to think some who may read this have never started. Will you not start for heaven this very day? Will you not make your calling and election sure? "Now is the accepted time, and to-day is the day of salvation."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### **True Liberty: Its Nature, Its Necessary Conditions, Its Development and Its Author.**

TEXT.—John 8:32: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

It would be hard to condense more of meaning and consequence into a brief statement than is found here. Such a sentence is well worthy of its divine Author. Here is the germ of the highest political wisdom and profoundest statesmanship. It is only as the great principles of this passage are grasped and applied that true liberty is secured for the individual, the nation or the race.

I. This passage brings directly to view the value of liberty, and shows how it may be secured, and by inference it points to the evil of slavery and to the cause producing it.

1. It needs no argument to convince men of the supreme value of freedom. There is no word that thrills the soul and fires the heart as much as the word “liberty.” The very mention of the name causes the eye to kindle with enthusiasm. Those names that are associated with the great cause of liberty will ever be held sacred in the hearts of all true men the world over. On the other hand, there is no word that begets in the mind such unspeakable dread and fills the soul with such dark forebodings

of despair as the word "slavery." To be free means to move along the line of highest possibilities and greatest achievements. To be a slave means to travel the road leading downward to ever baser conditions and ending in the lowest, meanest destiny. All noble souls have ever aspired to liberty or struggled for its achievement. Base, ignoble souls have been content to hug the chain that degrades them, and sink to the condition of ignominy and shame. When Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," he uttered the emancipation proclamation for which the ages had waited and in the utterance announced himself as the greatest benefactor of the race.

2. In this language the fact is implied that ignorance is the necessary condition of slavery. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," therefore without this knowledge they were ignorant, and, being ignorant, they were not free; but, on the contrary, they were in bondage. This is a truth that men have been slow to learn. Physical bondage is not the only nor the worst kind of slavery. The bondage of mind that the physical bondage superinduces or makes possible is the slavery most to be dreaded, and this may exist when the other is waiting.

3. This text directly declares that emancipation is accomplished by knowledge. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." You can not confer freedom in the highest sense by law. Constitutions of civil and religious liberty can not make men truly free. Legal freedom is a necessary step, but it is not the end; true freedom results from knowledge. We have not done all that is needed

when we have stricken the shackles from the hands of men. A more radical work is necessary to make them free.

II. The implication of the text that ignorance enslaves men is a truth of universal application. It holds good in every department of life.

It is well to note the specific applications of the truth here disclosed:

1. Religious ignorance enslaves men. Men who are ignorant concerning the one true and living God are slaves to superstition and gross sensualism. Idolatry, with all its hideous manifestations, is the result. Wherever the knowledge of God is not found, "darkness covers the world and gross darkness the people." Religious people who are ignorant of the truths taught by their religious neighbors are slaves to the most narrow bigotry and partisan prejudice. The only cure for sectarianism is more knowledge. I know of no slavery much more to be dreaded than one imposed by this unlovely and un-Christlike thing. Such a man is bound by chains that confine him to very narrow limits. Sectarianism is a strait-jacket, a Chinese shoe. It is slavery of the meanest kind. Listen to Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here is the cure for the slavery of sectarianism, idolatry and all false religions that curse the world.

2. Social ignorance enslaves men. There is a certain kind of slavery in every community. Men are circumscribed and hemmed in by little social rules and artificial barriers that divide the people into classes, clans and cliques. All this is slavery. It is an abridgment of freedom. It dwarfs the soul and paralyzes the noblest powers of man. There is

only one cure for all this, and that is knowledge. The necessary condition of social freedom is a correct understanding of those with whom we mingle. We hate men because we do not know them or because we misunderstand them. In this Christ's words have force. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

3. Scientific ignorance enslaves men. A man is a slave to superstition and fear who is ignorant of physical laws. People who know nothing of astronomy are frightened by comets and meteoric displays. Natural phenomena are regarded as omens of dire events by the ignorant. Persons ignorant of physiological laws are slaves to superstition and to the cunning craftiness of designing men. Thus quacks of all kinds practice on the credulity of men. People are slaves to lust, appetite, disease, through ignorance of physical and physiological laws. Here also the language of Christ applies, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

4. Political ignorance enslaves men. For the first three-quarters of a century millions of black people were held in slavery in this country. It is interesting to ask what were the conditions that made this possible in free America? First of all, it was ignorance on the part of the dominant class. Some men thought that black men had no souls, that they were merely animals; others contended that the Bible taught slavery, while still others looked upon the black race as a constitutionally dependent race and consequently doomed to slavery. This was the first condition of bondage.

Ignorance on the part of the black man was the second condition. He could not even read or write,

and it was a crime in law to teach him to do so. Being ignorant, he was scarcely aware of his own degradation. To both master and slave the words of Christ apply, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

There is yet a form of political slavery in this country that I feel sure is the result of ignorance. Half of our population have no political privileges. They can not vote and have no voice in making laws. They can not hold office and are taxed without representation. What is the reason for this condition? Unless I am entirely at fault, it is ignorance: ignorance, first of all, concerning the true nature of woman. Some fear she will be degraded by entering the political arena, that it is contrary to her nature to have part in political affairs, and therefore they hold that she must be protected by law. It may well be observed that the very best protection for woman is her own inherent nature. If it is contrary to woman's nature to take part in politics that fact will keep her from doing so, even if granted the privilege. This slavery also results from ignorance as to the true relations of the sexes. Man, apart from woman, is not a complete individual. The same is true of woman separated from man. The creation of man was not complete until Adam and Eve were both formed and married by God. The two constitute the true unit. The rib story so much ridiculed is the most reasonable story in the world. A study of each will show that man and woman are counterparts of each other. Man is for policy, woman for principle; man is for gain or self-aggrandizement, woman for charity; man is for success, woman for right; man is restless, woman is for home. These

qualities are all right, but they must be blended. They are supplementary. What we need in our Government to-day are the qualities that woman possesses. Men complain of the corruption of politics. Did you ever see anything run solely by men that was not corrupt? The school, the army, all purely male institutions, have a tendency to coarseness and corruption. It is a great calamity for a man to be cut off from the influence of mother, sister and wife. It is a misfortune for men to be isolated from women in any capacity.

III. I also gather from this text that true liberty is reached by a gradual process of development.

Christ said, "Ye shall know the truth," but knowledge is a growth. It comes by degrees and steps, and it comes slowly. Jesus also said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it becomes the greatest among all herbs."

All kingdoms of truth are in a sense kingdoms of heaven, and they are all like a grain of mustard seed. They have vitality. They begin with a very small germ and they become great, by a gradual process of growth.

1. This truth is verified in all forms in which truth presents itself. You can not kill it. "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again." This is true of *theoretical* truth. You can not put down a great *philosophic* truth; at least, not permanently. It is true of *concrete* truth—truth presented in an invention. No really useful invention can be kept out of the mill, factory or from the farm. Men have tried it, but in vain. It is true of truth concretely presented



in a man. You can not permanently overthrow a true man. If you put him down, posterity will right the wrong. It is also progressive. "First the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear." Take the fundamental principle of our Government. "All men are born free and equal." It was small in the beginning, as judged by numbers. It has grown much since the battle of Bunker Hill, both in its constituency and in its practical application.

2. This progress is seen in the necessary steps in the evolution of government. Man has three fundamental wants outside of the purely physical; namely, instruction, mediation and rule or government. These are met respectively in prophet, priest and king. The king is necessary in order to have the peace, order and stability of human society. There must necessarily be a king of some kind, or at least the function of government must be performed in some way. The history given in the Bible shows that the first form of government is theocratic. God rules first through the patriarch, then through the king which doubtless gave rise to the doctrines of the divine right of kings. The monarchical form of government would be the ideal government if the ruler completely represented God; that is, if he were infinite in justice, mercy, wisdom and power.

The third step in the progression is a republic. God rules, not through one man, but through all. This is better because all are likely to have more wisdom and judgment than the one man may have. Here we get a hint of the necessary condition of successful republican government. The people must have God in them. They must be intelligent, wise, righteous, just. Schools and churches are neces-

sary to a free government. No ignorant or vicious people are capable of self-government. The ideal government will appear when all men are modeled after the divine standard. The true patriot must necessarily work along Christian lines. Christianity is the hope of our country. Christ's Golden Rule was: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This would solve all the problems that perplex us to-day. We will have a good, stable government when in the breast of every man shall reign the justice that reigns in the bosom of God; when in the character of every man shall exist the purity of God; when in the heart of every man shall dwell the love that exists in the heart of God. Then the voice of the people will be the voice of God. All this implies, however, increasing measures of truth. It means growth. It means progress! "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

3. This progress is seen in the history of this nation. First in our history as a people came the planting and maturing of the seed of liberty. This was brought over in the "Mayflower" in 1620. One hundred and fifty years were thus spent. They were years of growth. It culminated in the Declaration of Independence. The war of the Revolution was the second step in the majestic progress. This long and bloody war was fought for the formal and outward establishment of the great principle of civil liberty. The war of 1812 was fought to determine the strength and stability of the great principle. This is called the second war of independence. The war of 1861 was fought for the practical and universal application of the great principle. "All men" had been construed to mean all white men. It cost a million

of lives and two billions of dollars to settle the question that "all men" meant "all men" and not "some men." Behind this lies a great truth that Jesus Christ gave the world; namely, that the individual man is the unit of value.

It has been a question from the beginning as to what constitutes true greatness. Various standards have been set up. Wealth, wisdom and power have been the usual standards. These ideas made the world into which Christ came. It was a cruel, heartless world as a consequence. Christ gave the world the true idea. He taught that manhood constitutes greatness. Man is great because he is a man. This idea has filled the world with eleemosynary institutions. This idea has written Magna Chartas and constitutions of liberty. Jesus Christ is the author of liberty by virtue of his doctrine of the greatness of man.

4. The nature of true liberty indicates progress. There are two ways to govern men: One is by outward restriction, and one is by inward principle. Men may be governed by law and penalties, or by the development of principles in the heart. Both methods are necessary, and each is applicable under certain conditions and certain states. Outward restraint must come first. It is adapted to man in his primitive or undeveloped state. Primitive peoples must be governed by law. Children must be under law. Before, however, true liberty is reached, inward principle must become the governing power. The law must be written on the heart. As long as law is external, man is a slave.

God's different dispensations give us an illustration of this truth. Judaism was a system of law or

newest principle. It was a blessing. Paul calls it a *rule*. Christianity is a system of inward principles. The law is written on the fleshy tables of the heart.

Thus we find an incentive as to the duty we owe to the Lord Jesus. It was a great thing to strike the statutes from the stone, but it was not enough. He wrote inward principles of righteousness and self-control. Paul outward law is reduced to inward principles by a new law.

The great dominant principle out of which true liberty comes is love of God. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Christ came to give the knowledge to us. He said, "I am the truth." Before Christ came, God was Jehovah. After Christ came, God was Father. The love of God was manifest in Jesus. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh." The design of all this is to reveal God in aspects to man and love. "We love God because he first loved us." Jesus is revealing God's love, since in our heart the seed from which springs our love of God. This is the foundation of our love to man. He who loves God also loves man best, and this is the soil in which springs the true love of liberty. How wonderful and far-reaching the truth! "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### **The Emancipation Proclamation.\***

TEXT.—John 8:36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

1. There are certain words that of necessity imply an opposite. Darkness implies light; purity, impurity; exaltation, debasement; salvation, damnation; freedom, slavery. Often we fail to understand a thing by not understanding its opposite. We may not appreciate sight because we have never been blind; or food, because we have never been hungry; or health, because we have never been sick. So we may not appreciate the wonderful significance of such language as this, because we do not know what slavery means.

2. Jesus told the Jews that "the truth shall make you free." This was to open their eyes to the true nature of the kingdom—to show its spiritual character. They felt the galling yoke of political slavery, and were looking for emancipation. Christ tells them of another kind of emancipation. When Christ said, "The truth shall make you free," they replied, "Seed of Abraham are we, and have never been in bondage." Very small were their views of things, and yet the same is true to-day. Many are in

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\*Some of the thoughts in this chapter have been gathered from sources I do not recall; possibly to a sermon of F. W. Robertson as much as to any other source.

bondage who are not aware of their abject condition. Jesus teaches a new doctrine. He says whosoever is committing sin is the servant of sin. "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." We think that unless we hear the iron chains clank there is no slavery. Our nation is full of slaves; our city is full of bondsmen. In every house are slaves. Do you say it is awful to be a slave? Better be a literal slave and feel the galling chains than to be a slave to sin. There is no slavery so terrible as this.

**I. Let us study what is involved in the slavery this language discloses.**

1. The first phase of slavery is seen in the loss of a free man's rights. There are more benefits enjoyed by those born free than can be specified by word or charter. There is absence of a sense of limit, restraint, superspection, which in itself is a great blessing. The free mingling with the free, with men of lofty aim, an open field to enter the generous contests of life, to prepare one's self to stand where the loftiest stand—all this is denied to a slave. Yet this is the position occupied by the slave of sin. Fateful words, "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." The privilege of saying, "I am a Roman citizen," was an enormous privilege. Paul was glad on one occasion to say it. A citizen of Christ's kingdom enjoys wonderful prerogatives, among which is liberty in its truest sense. Those not Christians may say, "I would not be as those Christians, so tied up, so hindered, so restricted." A Roman slave might have said, "I would not wear those robes, that badge, those insignia of office that the citizen wears. I would rather have the free

life of the servant." In one sense, the slave is freer than the master. But do you want this? Which kind of freedom is preferred? Freedom from lofty things or from debasing conditions? In this life there is no greater privilege than the equal free mingling of pure, exalted spirits, who enjoy equal rights and privileges. The "commonwealth of Israel" is made up of those who receive their patent of nobility from God. To be without Christ is to be excluded from the commonwealth of immortal princes—their thoughts, employments and enjoyments. No true pleasure does Christianity destroy, no real liberty does it abridge. It is necessary to repeat this again and again.

2. Another phase of slavery is this: The slave has no choice of employment. He goes when, and where, and to do what, the master says. He must obey. Perhaps some one is saying, "How your analogy will not hold good." Yes, it will hold good in every phase of the subject. Sin is an awful tyrant. Free from the duties of the Christian, the sinner is bound to the drudgeries of sin. Sin comes alluringly, offering to bring the individual pleasures and delights, but by degrees it binds its victim, hand and foot, and holds him a slave. Take any sinful indulgence as an example. Intemperance is an awful slavery. Go to the drunkard and plead in the name of wife, children, friends. He will say, I can not break the chain that binds me. All who seek vice as a servant to their enjoyment sell themselves to a cruel tyrant. Sin as a master has no heart of pity; he sheds no tears; your anguish and remorse will not touch him. When you would go about other and higher employment, you can not do so:



3. Further notice, that the slave has no accumulation of property. He is himself property. All he gathers goes to another except by favor. There are some beautiful things in human slavery. The slave true to his master, and *vice versa*. Not so in this slavery. Sin is inhuman. He gives to his victim merely to quiet him. No slave of sin accumulates property. Property for the body is that which will give it some sustenance, comfort or adornment. What will sustain the soul? Truth, friendship of highest spirits, whatever the soul can enjoy when it passes out of the body. If a man has spent his whole life in sin, what will he have in eternity? No purity, no spiritual power, no love of truth, no enduring riches. He dies as a slave dies and has nothing. Jesus said, "Lay not up treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt." What folly to spend life to accumulate simply for the body. The soul is to live forever. Shall not some provision be made for eternal needs?

4. Another phase of slavery is this: The slave has no power to rise. In human slavery, no matter how noble in soul, how great in faith, in charity, in truthfulness, in courage, the slave can not rise. He can hold no office. He was born a slave and dies a slave. There is an insurmountable barrier between him and all upward paths. The poor free child with no greater powers, physical, intellectual or moral, may grow and ascend. The slave, while a slave, never rises. He need not aspire. It is just so with the slave of sin. Whatever his power may be, he can not rise truly till his fetters are broken. Now and then there may come over him a sickening sense of his ponderous incapacity. He can see heights above

he can not scale. Worse still, the slave may become apathetic. He may lose his desire to rise. He may lose courage, hope, aspiration. He may become a slavish slave and hug his chain. So may the sinner become. It is an awful state. Better waste your strength in fruitless effort than to become careless and indifferent. Better try and fail than not to try at all. Better struggle and be overcome than to be vanquished without an effort. If my lot at last should be cast with those who are banished from God, it seems to me my misery would be somewhat assuaged by the thought that at least I had made a heroic effort to break the chains of sin.

5. In the case of abject slavery the slave is liable to be sent away at any time. He can not refuse to go. If the master should become inhuman and hate the slave, or conditions make it necessary, he may be sent away. Resistance would be utterly useless. He is powerless. Such is the case with the slave of sin. Sin is always inhuman. It hates its vassals. The bondage of the soul to evil passions and appetites is a perpetual gravitation away from the home of the soul. This is the last and direst of the evils of this slavery; banishment "from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." God does not willfully banish; he loves, draws, longs for, but sin banishes. What idea so dreadful. A perpetual going away from light, warmth, purity, music, peace, joy, love, freedom—awful thought. How long will this last? Forever; down, down to the bottomless pit. Chains of darkness. Everlasting slaves. No year of jubilee; no emancipation; no freedom. Men hear chains clank now till the blood curdles, but do not have strength to break them. You are a strong

man; maybe you can pile up a fortune, lead an army, govern an empire. Try to break away from one evil habit and see how weak you are. James II. on his deathbed said, "There is no slavery like sin, no liberty like God's service." Was not that dethroned king right? What think you of chains of indulged lusts? The drunkard, the sensualist can not resist. Know you more abject slaves?

II. This prepares us to meet the one great question, "Can man be delivered from this awful bondage?"

1. This is the question that has perplexed men from the beginning. Man's best intellectual endeavors have been expended in discovering systems of emancipation. The general result has been to add outward restraint to inward bondage. Education has failed. It only increases the capacity of the slave to serve his master. Civilization has failed, legal enactment has failed, but God in his mercy has provided a way of escape.

2. We get the true answer in Jesus Christ, who is the world's only great and real liberator. How does he do it? First, by creating a sense of personal responsibility. No one ever saw so much in a man as Jesus saw. He never looked upon any one not worth saving. Jesus makes every one feel that God loves him. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish." "Whosoever" is distributive. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Every man is treated as an individual unit. Each must think and act for himself.

Christ's next object is to give light. "Go *teach* all nations." We need instruction. By reason of sin

we see all things distorted. The great appears small and *vice versa*. Christ shows us our relations to God, and God's attitude to man. He also breaks the fascination of sin. Sin is soporific. Christ comes to awaken us out of guilty sleep. "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead," is the admonition of the apostle. God seeks to turn our eyes from the fascination of sin to objects more lovely. The central object is a lover sacrificing himself for the object of love.

Christ's next object is to establish a bond of union between man and God. Sin has destroyed the law of gravity in the moral world. Christ re-establishes the law by making God's will supreme. This is what Paul means by "glorious liberty of the children of God." It is liberty from chaos, from anarchy, from destruction.

Christ gives us a title deed to an inheritance. We become property holders. Our right to inheritance has been forfeited. Christ gives us a new claim. He declares, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you."

This is what Christ means by making us free indeed. No man is free until Christ makes him so. All these glorious effects flow from breaking the chains of sin. We are freed from sin in the heart, sin in the life, and from the results of sin. We secure pardon, new relationships and a new home of blessedness.

Here is an emancipation proclamation good for any country or time. Here is freedom in comparison with which there is no other.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### **Grounds of Confidence for the Triumph of Truth.\***

John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

1. No occasion or opportunity can be utilized for the highest possible ends that is not magnified in the minds of all to whom it comes.

The young man or woman just entering upon school life must magnify the opportunity to accomplish most. If it is looked upon as great, the results will be correspondingly great.

The man elected to office must magnify his office in order to serve his constituency best and dignify his office.

The man accepting any work must feel that it is great, in order to do it in a great way, and it does not matter much what honest work a man may undertake, if he does it exceedingly well, it will be great.

2. This same principle holds good when applied

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\* In this chapter I present thoughts very similar to some in a chapter headed "The Distinctive Plea of the Disciples of Christ," found in my book entitled "The Great Salvation," but the thoughts are somewhat differently expressed and used for a different purpose in this connection, and, as it seems to me, have a logical place in this volume.

to any occasion that may come to us as individuals, or as organized bodies. If we regard it as small, unimportant, a mere pastime, a chance for recreation or amusement, it means but little; that which looks small is small, so far as practical results are concerned. If, however, we look upon our opportunity as a great occasion, if we really magnify it in our minds, it were impossible to overestimate its power for good. It may not be amiss to mention a few things that would be of immense benefit to every Christian worker. He needs to have the bond of sympathy strengthened between himself and every co-laborer in the vineyard. To stand as an isolated unit is to be unnecessarily weak. He needs to have an enlarged conception of the work that God has committed to him. No man can be great that takes small views of things. He needs to draw on the common fund of wisdom and experience that all together possess; thus the wealth of one becomes the possession of all. He needs to have his confidence in the final success of the work God has committed to his hands strengthened. The importance of this is very great. No man who expects failure is very likely to succeed. A discouraged people are never a strong people, no matter what they may be in other respects.

Believing I can use a little space to no better advantage, I will recount some of the reasons for believing in the ultimate triumph of the great principles of Protestantism.

**I. The first reason is found in the invincible power and conquering force of truth.**

1. It may rightfully be said that there is nothing so powerful as ideas, and especially ideas of a cer-

tain kind. Carlos Martyn says, "Charge ideas with the dynamite of righteousness and conscience, and they will blow every form of opposition to pieces." All truth, no matter to what realm it belongs, is powerful; nay, perhaps I may safely say, invincible, but some forms of truth seem to manifest their power with peculiar vigor and strength.

Truth that bears directly upon human condition; truth that pertains to human rights or that affects man's moral and religious nature; truth that appeals to the human heart and human conscience—can never be permanently put down. Such truth seems to be charged with the very immortality and power of God. Wendell Phillips said, referring primarily to political truth, "The man that launches a sound argument, who sets on two feet a startling fact and bids it travel across the continent, is just as certain that in the end he will change the government as if to destroy the capitol he has placed gunpowder under the Senate chamber." What is true of political truth is equally true of religious truth. No truth is more important to men than religious truth, and none has shown so great power to stir the human soul.

When even one earnest man seriously gives himself to the consideration of a great moral question, no one can predict the consequences that may result. When Savonarola pondered upon the corruption, injustice and wrong going on around him, deeply, religiously in earnest, ideas that were to arrest a world's attention and change the current of a world's history were being born. Luther, in his monk's cell, buried in thoughtful meditation, was storing up the moral dynamite that was to shake the Roman hier-



archy to its center and shatter its very foundations. Wesley, at Oxford, giving himself to prayerful reflection and the earnest study of God's Word, was generating the forces of a mighty moral and religious upheaval. Alexander Campbell, in his solitary study, built under the trees hard by his quiet country home, absorbed in profound religious thought, was setting in motion the forces of a mighty religious revolution. Had it not been for those silent midnight vigils, one of the greatest religious movements of all the centuries would doubtless have died at its birth. The world has not been able to cast away the thoughts of Savonarola or Luther or Wesley, nor will it be able to put aside the thoughts of the Campbells, because these God-sent men gave to the world what the world needed, and at the psychological moment.

2. It is, however, true that great truth has often been slow to make its way among men. Strange to say, even the greatest truth has seemed to walk with tardy step. Error has sometimes appeared to run with swifter feet. On this account, many grow discouraged and say, "Surely truth will bear its own credentials; surely truth that only seeks to bless, will not be opposed," and because there is opposition and slow progress, they are almost ready to distrust the truth. Still, it remains true that no matter how long truth may have been delayed, no matter how long its triumph may have been deferred, in the end victory has been sure. No opposition has ever permanently succeeded, and I have no fears that the enemies of truth will ever permanently gain the victory. The issue is never doubtful; God Almighty is pledged to its success.

3. There is, however, a great danger to which we do well to give heed. It is God's purpose to propagate truth through human agency. That God does so is proof enough of its wisdom, whether we can understand it or not, and the history of all reforms shows us that truth has suffered more from the hands of its friends than from its enemies. Unwise advocacy is worse than opposition of opponents. It is, therefore, true, that while man can not kill the truth, man can retard it. Paul felt this when he said, "I suffer all things lest I should hinder the gospel of Christ."

We need not fear as to the ultimate outcome, but we may well feel alarmed as to our own responsibility in the matter. God has called us into a wonderful partnership, and our failure may retard the truth and lose for us the great reward. But if we fail? Only this, God will find a more worthy instrument, and in the end truth will come into its kingdom.

**II. The second reason for confidence is the intrinsic greatness of the various Protestant pleas.**

1. Every great truth, whether political or religious, has, in the providence of God, been committed to the guardianship of a particular people. Races and nations and great religious bodies have been commissioned by God to hold up some great truth. Each has had some truth to work out and hand forward, not for itself, but as a contribution to the common inheritance of the race. The philosopher in the realm of history finds no trouble in discovering the great dominant thoughts of races and nations that serve to explain the character of

the people, and without which history is an unsolvable enigma.

To the Jew was committed the idea of one true and living God. This idea has been the contribution of the Jew to the common fund. This idea made the Jews a religious nation; it made them, indeed, a peculiar people, working out the divine plan in preparing the world for the accomplishment of God's gracious purpose respecting the race. To the Greek was given the idea of wisdom or perfection. Paul discovered this; he declared the Greeks seek after wisdom. This serves to explain the nation. This accounts for the fact that the Greeks have given us the most wonderful philosophy, art and language the world has ever seen. After the lapse of more than two thousand years, we go back and sit at the feet of Greek philosophers and make her art our models. To Rome was given the idea of power as expressed in civil law. With her power was the highest good. Her poet sang, "It is yours, O Rome, to give laws to the nations, to protect the weak and humble the proud." To the Anglo-Saxon God committed the idea of liberty. It is the people of Anglo-Saxon blood that have written the constitutions of civil and religious liberty, and have given largest freedom to men. All have served a great purpose; all have contributed to give the race its larger inheritance. Incidentally God has taught the impotency of law, either divine or human; the inability of wisdom or culture, and the powerlessness of even civil liberty to save the race, and thus in a negative way prepare the world for salvation by grace through the God-man who came to seek and save the lost.

2. This great truth finds illustration in the his-

tory of Protestantism. Every great Protestant people has been the conservator of some great truth. Each has had a conspicuous, dominant idea that has come in large measure to characterize the body. Each has had in keeping some truth to magnify and hand forward that in the fullness of time it might become the inheritance of all. No one has had all the truth, but each has received the truth that those who went before had in keeping and to it has added its own peculiar treasure.

Sometimes this truth has been taken out of its relation to other truth, and sometimes it has been in some degree perverted, but, after all, each has held some peculiar truth with more or less of justice and clearness.

To Luther it was given to grasp the idea of the Bible as the book of the people, which was the great doctrine of Protestantism, and to add his own peculiar message: the doctrine of justification by faith as opposed to justification by works of penance, which was advocated by the hierarchy of Rome. Here it may be well to notice that Luther, like all great reformers, came in the fullness of time. God's men are always on time; they come with their great truth just when they are needed most and when conditions are ripe for their appearance.

To Calvin was committed the idea of the divine sovereignty—a great truth, a necessary truth, when set in proper relation to other truth, and it was needed at that particular moment when the divine prerogatives were being usurped by one who, as foretold by the sacred writer, sat in the temple of God, assuming to be God, or to exercise his functions.

To James Arminius was given the doctrine of the freedom of the human will, as set over against the extreme doctrine of Calvinism, that denied all human power and consequent responsibility by failing to consider that a sovereign God had seen fit to make a free man.

To Wesley it was given to emphasize the spiritual side of Christianity, coupled with the idea of the freedom of the human will. It stands as a protest against extreme formalism and extreme Calvinism. In other words, to Wesley it was given to set in proper relation the doctrines of Calvin and Arminius, and to add the doctrine of spiritual religion as opposed to the idea that religion was a matter of form and ceremony, posture of body, cut of clothes and observance of days and seasons.

To Alexander Campbell and his contemporaries was given the divine idea of the union of all Christians on the basis of simple apostolic Christianity. The famous Declaration and Address of 1809, by Thomas Campbell, was an arraignment of sectism and a call to union. It involved the gathering together of the truths of all, and setting them in their true relations to each other. It was both a plea and a method. The plea was union, and the method a return to the Christianity of the apostolic day, in doctrine, ordinances and life. It began with Christ's intercessory prayer for his disciples that they all may be one, "that the world may believe." It said by going back to Christ and his apostles, nothing can be lost. It declared that if Luther, Calvin, Arminius and Wesley taught great truths they got it from Christ and his apostles; that they merely taught what God had given them to see, that had been

dropped out of sight. Hence, a return to apostolic Christianity was safe, and thus all later corruptions would be avoided.

3. The history of Protestantism has, in a general way, been the history of a great development. From the time when the first grey streaks of dawn broke upon the darkness in which the Roman apostasy had plunged the world, the light has been growing brighter, and let us hope that it will continue to increase until the full noontide glory of the perfect day appears. Each reformer has taken a forward step. Each was able to make some advance because of those who went before. Each, standing on the shoulder of those who preceded him, was able to take in a larger horizon and to see with a more unobstructed vision.

Happy had it been if the Protestant world had been able to recognize these movements as steps in a great progression, rather than as ultimate ends beyond which no farther progress was possible. In this failure is found an explanation for many of the mistakes and follies that have resulted in the unfortunate contentions of Protestantism and the consequent divisions of the Christian world.

4. This plea of the Campbells is one of magnificent proportions. No people ever crystallized around a greater or more important idea. No man who grasps this plea in all its fullness, need ever hang his head in shame. Great as was the truth for which Luther and other great reformers have stood, God has never honored any people with a grander mission than the one to which this people have been called, because it means the gathering up into one



united whole, all truth for which the great reformers have contended.

Several things unite to give dignity and importance to this plea, which, if apprehended, would constitute a long step in religious progress:

(1) First of all comes the intrinsic greatness and merit of the plea itself. The abolition of sectism and the union of all Christians in outward and spiritual union, is a conception that seems to be in most perfect accord with the mind of Christ. Four great characters contributed directly to the working out of the essential features of the plea. First in order stands Thomas Campbell, who laid hold of the great idea of the union of the people of God, as a matter fundamental to the extension of the kingdom of God and the conquest of the world for Christ. With him, Christian union was a burning passion. He clearly saw that union was the matter that needed emphasis just then, in order to successfully carry out the commission of our Lord. The great Declaration and Address of 1809 was an arraignment of sectism, and a powerful plea for union by a return to apostolic preaching and practice. Next in order, and contemporaneous with him, stands Alexander Campbell, his illustrious son. Grasping the great fundamental plea as clearly as his father; he laid particular stress on the Lordship of Jesus, clearly seeing that divisions had arisen by exalting human authority above the authority of the great head of the church, thus virtually annulling the great fundamental principle of Protestantism. Along with these two appeared Walter Scott, to whom it was given to apprehend with great clearness the simple, logical and Scriptural law of pardon, as laid down



by the apostles as they went out under the great commission, and which had been displaced by human theories concerning the nature of man and the nature and character of God, resulting in confusion confounded in the teaching and practice of the religious world concerning the vital question of pardon and acceptance with God. Fundamental to these unscriptural theories and practices lay the doctrine of total depravity, and the idea that God must be reconciled to man instead of the Scriptural idea that man needed reconciliation with God. Finally, Barton W. Stone, of Kentucky, took his stand with the Campbells, emphasizing in a powerful way the thought that the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice, thus displacing all creeds and confessions of faith as authoritative statements of doctrine. Along with all went a clear distinction between the old and new covenants, showing where the former ended and the latter began, thus placing the New Testament in its true relation to the old.

(2) In the next place, the plea is great because of that which takes its roots in this. The question of name, creed, ordinances, all of which have come to be looked upon as cardinal points in the plea, are really but subordinate items growing out of the great central idea. Party names were eschewed, not because of any hatred for the men or principles that suggested them, but because names of themselves are divisive and the plea was a call for union. Creeds were set aside, not because they did not contain truth, but because they produced division by exalting human deductions and theories above the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, and making these human systems authoritative. Ordinances were em-

phasized because church authority had substituted human expedients for the plain, simple requirements of Christ and his apostles. The baptism of the New Testament had been set aside by many for the affusion that came into practice by way of Rome, and the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper had been displaced by a more infrequent celebration of that most sacred and important ordinance. By a return to apostolic Christianity it was seen that the things that divide would be eliminated, hence the cry went up, "Back of Oxford, back of Geneva, back of Wittenberg, back of Rome, back of the Nicene Council, back to Christ and his apostles."

(3) Also this plea is great because of its historic position as a religious movement. It is the climax of all reformations—a sort of keystone in the arch. It is the logical result to which all previous reformations have led. It is the gathering up of all preceding reformations and binding them into a related whole. Such a movement could only come when it did; certainly it could not have come earlier. The time was ripe for it, as is indeed true of all reformations. In this movement the cardinal doctrine of Protestantism finds practical exemplification.

(4) This plea is great because of that which depends upon it. The conquest of this world for Christ depends on its success. The Saviour's commission can never be successfully carried out in all its divine fullness by a divided church. The victories of the cross to-day are in proportion to the unity displayed by the followers of Christ.

**III. I believe in the final triumph of every true**

plea, because I believe in the righteousness of the final verdict of the people.

1. In studying the lives of great reformers, both political and religious, I have been impressed with the fact that they all believed in the fundamental honesty of humanity—they believed in men. Faith in the people has characterized all great moral leaders, and results have ever shown that this confidence was well founded. Let us, however, be careful lest we be led to expect too much here. This does not mean that the majority at any given time is right. It does not mean that the judgment of one million or fifty millions, is right, but it does mean that the decision of the people, when once informed, when lifted above the narrow prejudice and ignorance that curses them, will be right. The people mean right, and in the end will do right.

Wendell Phillips, in substance, said, "If you have a great truth do not fear to launch it upon the great ocean of humanity; it will be sure to find a safe harbor." This is a most cheering truth, and it ought to inspire great confidence in the final triumph of right.

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain  
And dies amidst its worshippers."

2. This fact is shown for the reason that all forms of evil instinctively dread the intelligent verdict of the people. Evil-doers seem to have an innate consciousness that the people, when informed, will take the side of the right. The policy of all wrong-doers, despots, tyrants, the liquor dealers in

our own land to-day, is to hide the truth, keep the facts from the people. Prejudice, superstition, reverence for old effete customs, blind adherence to great names, all are used, in the cause of error, to keep the people from seeing the truth. Every evil thing that flourishes in our country is intrenched behind popular ignorance and prejudice, which is only another form of ignorance.

Error can not stand the light, while truth craves the light. Error dies in the light and flourishes in darkness, while truth pines in the darkness, and flourishes in the light. Why is this true? Simply because the hearts of the people are in sympathy with the right. There is in man a latent sympathy with virtue and truth. But here is the unfortunate thing: Prejudice and superstition so blind men that they are sometimes slow in seeing the light. This calls for patience on the part of the advocates of truth, but they may be ever consoled with the idea that when once the truth is seen, the victory is won.

So sure as I believe in the righteousness of the final verdict of the people, so sure I believe this verdict will eventually be in favor of every righteous plea. It is only a question of time, and possibly a shorter time than the most sanguine may expect, for many great reforms.

IV. I believe in the final success of the plea for Christian union in particular, because I believe in the innate sympathy of the Christian heart for that Christlike idea.

Theoretically, men may, and some do, oppose the doctrine of Christian union. I have heard candid, earnest, Christian men compare the divided church to an army composed of infantry, cavalry and ar-

tillery, the inference, of course, being that divisions are useful.

I have heard men argue that divisions are necessary in order to secure freedom from religious error and erroneous practice. Still, I have discovered that down in the heart there is a native sympathy for the union idea.

1. This sympathy is shown in the history and success of the Y. M. C. A. movement. It is the unsectarian character of this organization that gives it power. In so far as it succeeds in ignoring the things that divide, in so far it has power, and in this ratio it meets with success.

2. This is shown by the popularity of the International Sunday-school Lessons. They are no better, intrinsically, than some other series that have been proposed; nay, they are open to serious objection, as has frequently been pointed out. Still, they are by far the most popular lessons that have ever been tried, and nothing can make any headway in displacing them. Why this? Simply because of the unsectarian idea connected with them. It is an inspiration to know that Christian people and the children of Christian people, throughout the world, are studying on the same day, at the same hour, the same Scripture lesson. It is a sort of recognition of the common Christianity that underlies all sectarian divisions and binds the people of God together.

3. This is shown in the marvelous success of the Christian Endeavor movement. I look upon this movement as one of the most potent agencies for good that has ever arisen within the churches. Through its instrumentality a mighty army is being trained for efficient service. Through it the church

is getting its grip on the young as it has never done before. One of the great secrets of the success of the movement is its unsectarian character. While the innate sympathy that anything unsectarian calls forth is the great secret of success here, yet it is also true that nothing is contributing more to strengthen this sympathy than this movement. When the young people of a community are drawn together, as they are through these societies, it will be very hard to keep them divided by sectarian fences.

4. This is shown by the tendencies toward union that are seen in the foreign mission fields. Sectarianism does not seem to bear exportation well. It requires the utmost effort to keep the denominational lines intact on foreign soil. A united church of Christ in Japan is a most impressive evidence of the sympathy the unbiased heart has for Christian union.

Disciples, of all others, should welcome all this tendency toward union and lend encouragement in every possible way to all these agencies.

**V. I believe in the final success of this plea for union because of the success already achieved.**

1. Let us note, briefly, some of the indirect results of a plea for a united Christendom. Fifty years ago sectarianism was rampant and the plea for union was ridiculed. To-day much of the bitterness and hatefulness of sectarianism is gone, and Christian union has become a popular theme in pulpit and in press. The drift toward union is unmistakable, so much so that a blind man can scarcely fail to see it. Many things that were once considered characteristic of the advocates of Christian union, have ceased to be so, because they have been adopted by nearly all religious people. It would be a strange thing



to-day to hear any one call the Bible a dead letter and as worthless as last year's almanac, yet that was not uncommon not many years ago. A man who spoke out against creeds fifty years ago was voted a heretic, yet now it is common to hear men boast that they have never read the creed of their church. To profess ignorance of the creed is paraded as a virtue.

In many union meetings people are received on a simple confession of faith, as was the practice in apostolic days, and contrary to the almost universal practice not long since. Infant church membership is fast losing its hold on the people, and will soon be a thing of the past, and more Scriptural views of baptism are coming gradually to prevail.

2. The direct results are even more encouraging. Nearly a million and a half of people have been gathered together on the broad Christian platform that makes Christ the only creed and the Scriptures the only rule of faith and practice, on which the disciples stand. A people who have discarded, theoretically at least, all sectarianism; who plead for nothing as essential that is not essential to Christianity itself; who lay no obligations upon men, other than those imposed by Christ and his apostles; a people who have cast aside all creeds and tests of fellowship other than the Word of God, thus practically exemplifying the cardinal doctrine of Protestantism; a people who recognize a common Christianity as independent of sectarian tenets and who in their organized capacity stand for the great idea of the outward and spiritual union of all the people of God. This does not mean that no others favor union, but it does mean that this people constitute the only



organized protest against division. Every congregation of these people ought to be an object-lesson on Christian union, and unless this is the case, it is true neither to its principles nor to its mission.

It means something for such a people to have forty colleges of larger or smaller dimensions, beside academies and orphan schools. Many of these have more or less endowment, and are manned by a well-trained, consecrated, self-sacrificing company of teachers.

It means something to have a Foreign Missionary Society with a large force of missionaries in its employ, and with mission stations in Turkey, India, Japan, China, Africa, and other places, and with converts already numbered by thousands. It means something to have an efficient Home Society that is doing a large and growing work within the borders of the United States, planting new churches in many of our cities and throughout our great western empire that is so rapidly developing.

It means something to have a Christian Woman's Board of Missions with its hundreds of auxiliaries raising large sums for missions and education, and assisting in a most efficient way, both in our home and foreign work.

It means something to have State missionary societies in many States of the Union, each doing evangelistic work within State lines and with a large measure of success.

It means something to have inaugurated a church extension work, and to have already nearly reached the \$1,000,000 mark.

It means something to have organized a benevolent association that is caring for the aged, the

orphan, and the sick, in homes, schools and hospitals, and that is growing in favor and efficiency with amazing rapidity.

It means much to have formed a National Christian Educational Society for the bringing of the great cause of Christian education and ministerial training to the larger, fuller support of the churches and to the plane of efficiency their importance demands.

It means something to know that this great plea, after the lapse of a century, shows greater vigor than ever before; manifesting its power to hold under its sway the hearts of men, with no sign of weakness or impotency. If this be doubted, I point to the fifty thousand new members that are annually rallying to the standard set up. I point to the great fact that two churches every three days are being erected. I point to the fact that the schools and colleges founded by this people were never so prosperous as at the present time, and that endowments were never increasing so rapidly as now. I point to the fact that there has been a steady increase in missionary funds year by year. I point to the fact that this people were never so enthusiastic, so self-sacrificing, so spiritually minded as they are at the present time.

3. When shall a distinct people set for the advocacy of a distinct plea feel that their work is done? Whenever they succeed in handing their God-given message to all for whom it is intended; until then a separate people is necessary, beyond that time a separate existence is a sin. Some religious bodies have already accomplished their distinctive mission. The truths for which Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin and Wesley stood are now practically accepted by all. Separate organizations are now no

longer needed for the advocacy of their great truths; they have become a part of the common message. May God grant that the same may be true of the truths given to the Campbells and their contemporaries. In other words, may the plea for the union of God's people soon become unnecessary because that most desirable end shall have been reached. When that glad day shall come, the kingdom of God will make haste to run and be glorified in the earth as never before. Then speedily shall be heard the shout of victory: Halleluiah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

THE END.






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